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# ETHICS

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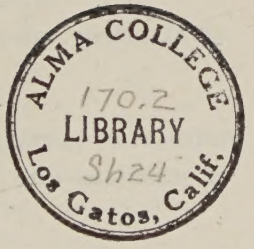
# ETHICS

BY
FRANK CHAPMAN SHARP
PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

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# ETHICS

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## Chapter I

## THE PROBLEMS OF ETHICS

The professor of applied mathematics was talking to a group of half a dozen undergraduates about playing the game of life, when one of them interrupted with the words: "How can we play the game when we don't know where the goal posts are?" It is the function of ethics to help men find the goal posts of life.

The subject matter of ethics is supplied by two intimately related terms, *right* and *good*. It deals, first, with those judgments upon actions in which we call them right or wrong, worthy of moral approbation or disapprobation. It deals also with our use of the terms *good* and *bad*. When we call conduct good we are indeed using the word as a synonym of right. But good is applicable to a much wider range of objects. A pen, a stroke at billiards, a dinner, a joke, a musical composition, may be good; and I may speak of my own good, or that of my family or my country. Some moralists concentrate their attention upon one of these terms to the exclusion of the other. But each raises its own problems and has its own difficulties; and a picture of the moral life which is not drawn with equal reference to both is incomplete and distorted and in so far false.

The fundamental questions raised by our judgments of right and wrong may be formulated as follows: (1) What actions have been and are regarded as right or wrong by the members of the human race? (2) What actions are really right? (3) What is the meaning of the adjective *right* as applied to actions?

The first of these questions, of course, is a problem of classification. Just as zoölogy describes at a stroke innumerable living creatures by calling them vertebrates, in virtue of the common possession of a certain type of structure, so ethics is bound to

supply us with a list of all the fundamental forms or classes of actions that call forth moral approbation and disapprobation. We shall see in Chapters II and III, that this is by no means a hopeless task.

As we study the findings of descriptive ethics we shall discover that opposite attitudes are often taken by different persons towards precisely the same act. For example, there has been the greatest possible variety of opinion about the morality of revenge; some holding it to be a right to which the aggrieved is entitled if he wishes to avail himself of it; others going farther and regarding it as a sacred duty; while still others look upon it as a heinous wrong. Here, accordingly, emerges the second problem of ethics, namely, What modes of action are really right, apart from what any particular race or age or person may think about the matter?

The representatives of the view called Subjectivism deny this problem any place whatever in ethical theory. For me to call an action right, they say, simply means that I like it; to call it wrong, in like manner, means that I dislike it. Since there is no disputing about tastes the utmost the moralist can do is to point out that a given action is attractive to some minds and repulsive to others.

The claims of our second problem to a place in a theory of ethics will thus have to be decided by our answer to the third, What is the meaning of the word *right?* It certainly seems remarkable that we should have to go to the special student for the meaning of a term which we use with a fair degree of accuracy every day in the week. But there is nothing exceptional about this fact. Only recently the president of the American Bankers' Association, in an address delivered to the leading bankers of the country, declared that not twenty per cent of his audience could give a satisfactory definition of the word *bank*. If the reader will attempt to define such words as *probable, essential, cause, time,* he will discover, provided he succeeds in keeping himself free from barren tautologies, that to use a term correctly is one thing, to be able to tell what it means is quite another.

Intimately related with the third problem is a fourth which has to do with the source of moral distinctions in the mind. What

is it within us which causes us to make these distinctions—to approve some kinds of actions as right, to disapprove others and brand them as wrong? The nature of the relationship which obtains between this problem and that of the meaning of right and wrong will become clear as we proceed. Here it is only possible to assert the relationship as a fact.

There are other important problems in this department of ethics, but those just enumerated are the fundamental ones in the sense that everything else depends upon our answer to them.

The study of the good and the bad follows exactly the same lines as that of the right and the wrong. Concerning these terms we shall in like manner ask: (1) What do the various members of the race regard as good or bad? (2) What things, if any, can properly be said to be "really" good? (3) What is the meaning of good? To these, also, may be added a fourth: What is the source in the mind of the distinction between good and bad? This department of ethics is often called "theory of value." *

A great deal of ink has been shed in the discussion of the question whether ethics is a purely *descriptive* science, like psychology, which contents itself with analyzing the complex structure of the mind and formulating the laws of its working, without any reference to the validity of its deliverances; or whether it is a *normative* science, like logic, whose function is to lay down norms or rules for the guidance of thought. Subjectivists, as we have seen, deny the existence in the moral world of any norms or standards binding on anyone except the person who happens to feel their obligatoriness. For those, on the other hand, who believe in the existence of rules of conduct valid for the entire race the normative problems of ethics form an integral part of the subject, and from the point of view of practice, perhaps the most important part. Of this second group I count myself a member. But I must insist that if the moralist who is primarily interested in the field of normative ethics is to do anything more than beat the air he must know the human conscience through and through. He must have a picture in his mind's eye of its structure and workings, which is at once detailed and accurate. And he must be familiar with its leading manifestations in whatever race or

* See Notes, I, "The Unity of the Right and the Good," page 493.

period they may be found. If he turns his back on these studies or merely dabbles with them, then what he is pleased to call his "conclusions" in the normative field will be nothing but the product of his personal equation, a batch of formulas which happen to appeal to his temperament and tastes. Any thoroughgoing investigation of the phenomena of the moral life will thus include within its purview description and explanation on the one hand, and the determination of validity, on the other; and will therefore insist, in the face of all attempts to truncate our science, that ethics is both descriptive and normative.*

Before setting forth upon our survey of the moral world it may be well to consider for a few moments what gain we may expect from our expedition.

In this age which sets its heart so undividedly upon the practical that it does not know how to be really practical, the profit which one feels most like emphasizing is that which the astronomer might urge in behalf of the claims of his science. To me at least it seems enough to say that ethics widens the field of vision and thus enriches life by the addition of interests which may grow deeper and broader with each passing year. The astronomer goes from his observatory to everyday life and back again. But the student of ethics dwells perpetually within an observatory where, night and day, the panorama of the moral life, now magnificent, now grotesque, now inspiring, now dispiriting, but always fascinating, is perpetually unrolling itself before his eyes. What gravitation is to the solar system, that is morality to social life. Should the bonds by which it unites men dissolve, human society would in that moment perish from the earth. So that in studying moral phenomena we are not examining some flourish on the scroll of life, but in very truth the foundations of social existence.

This consideration in itself would for some of us afford a sufficient reason for the study of ethics; but it is far from forming the only one. In order to guide our steps aright in this world of alternating twilight and darkness we need to understand thoroughly our own nature, including our moral nature. "Know thy-

* See Notes, I, "Ethics as a Study of Conduct," page 493.

self" was the inscription over the temple of the oracle at Delphi. "Most men know no more of their inner self than they do of Central Africa," wrote Channing, addressing an age which knew nothing whatever of Central Africa. If we are to guide, to counsel, or to command others, we must understand their nature also. When we study the records of human life through history and literature, ethics will help us to see the significance of much that would otherwise be opaque to our eyes; and it will direct our attention to much which without it we should have entirely overlooked. If we turn our gaze to the future and inquire what we can do to make human beings more honorable, more just, more sympathetic, more strong, it is ethics that must set our feet in the path we are to tread, because it is precisely ethics that tells us what honor, justice, sympathy, and strength of character are, what are their sources in the mind, and what is the secret of their appeal. If looking at the constant increase in the complexity of human life, in the volume and variety of its temptations, in the intimacy of the dependence of man on man, we ask, will the race prove equal to its new tasks, tasks the like of which this world has never before seen? the most important part of our answer to this question of questions, if answer there be, must come from the study of ethics.

For a reflective mind the intellectual temper of our age is such as to increase enormously the difficulty of devotion to duty. All sorts of voices are making themselves heard, proclaiming, each in its own manner, that the good man is a fool for his pains; or if not a fool, something worse. Moral standards, cries one, are for the emancipated soul nothing but the shadow of a bogy. They are the mere expressions of social customs which owe their origin ultimately to the egoism of some leader possessed of prestige, or to the whims of the multitude; having, in either event, no deeper foundations than the dislike some people feel for eating rabbits. Morality, insists another, is not childish folly, but is a deadly prejudice which must be eradicated from the minds of the intellectually enfranchised at whatever cost. Human society consists of two strata, the master class and the herd. As against the few select members of the first group the great body of human beings who compose the second have no more rights than the dirt

under our feet. For the former to allow themselves to be duped or terrorized by moral scruples in their dealings with the latter is for the strong to bind themselves with fetters and give the key to the weak. It is to splash the picture of one's life with mud, and to strike a deadly blow at all that is beautiful in human existence. To a man struggling in the grip of some fierce temptation come voices such as these. No wonder that he often cries with young Glaucon in Plato's *Republic,* "My ears are so dinned with what I hear that I am bewildered."

Now ethics can offer no specific for this state of mind. "You cannot believe in honor," writes Bernard Shaw, "until you have achieved it;" and until you have come to believe in it, you cannot even understand what the moralist is talking about. Ethics describes the moral experience; and where there is no moral experience, it is as futile to talk about it as to talk about a rainbow to a man born blind. It was for this reason that Aristotle declared that "Nothing but a good moral training can qualify a man to study what is noble and just,—in a word to study questions of [ethics]."

But to him who is essentially sound in character, even though he may be "perplexed in the extreme," ethics can reveal the significance of the moral life so that he can see for himself its eternal necessity, its beneficence, its beauty, and its reasonableness. Thus divided councils within the mind can be replaced by a purpose which can command every resource of the will because it represents a harmony of impulse founded upon insight.

Right action involves two factors, the knowledge of what is right and the desire to do it. Often the path of duty lies so completely open before us that to miss our way is impossible. Often again it would be easy to see what is right if it were not for the will to believe that the path of duty must be coincident with the path of pleasure or self-interest. Not infrequently, however, even the most intelligent and high-minded find themselves puzzled by the novelty or the complexity of the moral problems which they are compelled to face, whether in their own individual lives, or in their capacity as citizens, or as students of the social sciences. It may be worth our while to glance hastily at a few of these problems, in order that we may have some realization

of the extent of the field in which men must look to ethics for aid in determining what to do.

Most of the institutions of society supply the subject matter of some one social science. In this division of labor the study of the family and the problems of population, and the examination of our penal and charitable institutions, have fallen to the province of sociology. In these great fields, it is obvious, all the most important problems are ethical, and the majority of them are difficult.

Turning to the world of business relations with which economics is concerned we find the production and distribution of goods based largely upon the competitive principle. People distinguish between fair and unfair competition. What, then, is fair competition, and how can you tell the one from the other? Some of the most serious problems in our American economic life are due to certain practices which till recently have been almost universally regarded as quite innocent, and indeed as a normal feature of the competitive system. One of these is the practice of selling below cost in order to drive a rival either out of a particular territory or out of business altogether.[1] Is this a fair method of competition? If not, what becomes of the time-honored maxim that a man is free to sell to whom he pleases, and on what terms he pleases? Beneath these concrete questions lies another, far more fundamental: Is the term fair competition a contradiction? Is the whole competitive system immoral from top to bottom? There are those who answer this question with a vigorous affirmative, and in consequence demand an entire revolution in our economic institutions.

The thoughtful and sympathetic man must needs be troubled at the problems raised not merely by the production but also by the distribution of wealth. What constitutes a fair wage for a given kind and amount of labor? What is a fair return for the sacrifice involved in saving out of income in order to provide capital? What is a fair payment for the risks involved in its employment? We hear much today of the "living wage." Can the proposition be defended that every worker is morally entitled

[1] Consult W. S. Stevens, *Unfair Competition,* especially the last chapter.

to a "living wage?" Our country has witnessed within a generation the introduction and wide extension of the inheritance tax. Here is a method of paring down or in fact extinguishing great —and small—fortunes within comparatively short periods of time; and if society comes to believe this is the right thing to do, society will certainly proceed to do it. The progress of events thus compels us to face the group of questions connected with the right of inheritance. They, like the problem of the fair wage and the fair price, are all parts of a much broader problem: What constitutes a just distribution of wealth?

If we turn our attention to political life, we face new problems which insurgent minds and the march of events are thrusting more and more into the foreground. The state represents force. By what right does the state compel the unwilling to bend to its demands? And if this question can be answered satisfactorily in general terms, are there no fields where I have the right to be left to my own devices, where I may do what I will with my own? How determine where I ought to be free and where I ought to be subject to authority?

The most pressing of these issues are perhaps those which have to do with the relation of the state to the economic activities of its citizens. A generation ago the prevailing public opinion was that represented by the following words from a baccalaureate address by the president of a prominent university. "Capital, and when I say capital, I mean the men in control of capital, has an absolute right to determine the wages it will pay for the labor it seeks. This follows from the unquestionable right of every man to determine the price which he will pay for what he desires to buy." But the time has come when this "unquestionable right" has been questioned to such effect that a large number of our states have empowered commissions, especially created for the purpose, to determine what is the minimum wage that may be paid by manufacturers to their women and children operatives. This means that the employer must surrender to these employees the difference between the market price and what the community, acting through its representatives, regards as the lowest wage which it is desirable that they should receive. Many friends of the working class look upon this legislation as the beginning of

a new era of economic justice. Many employers, on the other hand, consider it to be nothing better than legalized robbery. Which party is right? [2]

The legislation just referred to is but a single illustration of tremendous changes now taking place, in regard to which every educated man and woman ought to have a reasoned opinion of his own.

In the field of foreign relations we find ourselves threading a maze even more complicated than that into which we have been thrust by domestic affairs. Have nations moral obligations to each other? To be specific, what duties has the United States to a world which in 1917 was to be made safe for democracy? Were the territorial settlements established after the World War based upon principles of justice? What are the principles of just settlement in such a matter? For example, ought the readjustments of boundary lines to have been left to the decisions of the inhabitants of the territories in question? In other words, do governments derive their just powers solely from the consent of the governed? If so, what becomes of the right of the North to put down the attempt of the Southern states to withdraw from the Union in 1861? If not, what becomes of the right of the American colonies to revolt from Great Britain in 1776? If the solutions of these and kindred problems hit upon by the peace conference were not substantially just, and if there are to be no readjustments in the future there will be a new world war in the course of a generation, because men of spirit will risk anything and suffer anything rather than submit permanently to what they regard as gross injustice.

"In the everyday transactions of life the average man is governed, not by statute, but by common law, or at most by statute built upon a substratum of common law, modifying in detail only, the common law foundation." [3] And in addition to judge-made

[2] The fact that the United States Supreme Court has recently declared this legislation unconstitutional does not permanently settle the question. In England and some of the commonwealths of the Empire the principle of the minimum wage has been applied to almost every calling where there has been any serious demand for it. If the demand is equally insistent in this country some way will be found to satisfy it.

[3] Cardozo, *The Growth of the Law*, 1924, p. 136.

common law, we have other bodies of important judge-made law, growing out of the interpretation of constitutions and statutes by courts.

A number of forces have operated to make the common law, like other judge-made law, what it is. The most important, perhaps, is the judges' sense of justice. The rules of common law have been developed in controversies not governed by existing rules of law, which judges have been called upon to decide. In deciding, the judges have had to make use of such conceptions of justice as they were able to muster into service.

"Cases without precedent," writes Professor Gray, "are more frequent than persons not lawyers generally suppose." [4] "In our appellate tribunals," says Dean Pound, "the difficulty that brings the cause up for review is usually that legal rules and legal conceptions have to be applied by analogy to causes that depart from the type for which the precept was devised or given shape. Such departures vary infinitely. Cases are seldom exactly alike. Hence choice from among competing analogies and choice from among competing modes of analogical development are the staple of judicial opinions." [5] Judge Cardozo has expressed a view about the modification of unworkable decisions, which has been given effect by his great court, the New York Court of Appeals. "Through one agency or another, either by statute or by decision, rules, however well-established, must be revised when they are found after fair trial to be inconsistent in their workings with an attainment of the ends which law is meant to serve . . . Some of this cleansing of ancient plague spots, the judges ought to do themselves." [6]

The development of law by judges through the application of ethical conceptions is exemplified by the following decision of the New York Court of Appeals. The judge who wrote the opinion in the case, Judge Cardozo, is one of those who insist most strongly upon the importance of ethics for the development of the law.[7]

[4] *Nature and Sources of the Law,* 2nd Edition, 1921, p. 100.
[5] *Law and Morals,* 1924, pp. 64-65. [6] *Op. cit.,* p. 120.
[7] The case was Hynes *v.* N. Y. C. R. R. Co., 231 N. Y. 229 (1921). See also 35 *Harvard Law* Review 68. Cardozo later commented on the opinion of the court, which he wrote, and its decision, in *The Growth of the Law,*

A boy of sixteen was swimming in a public river. He went upon a spring-board which had been used by swimmers for five years, and which was fastened to land belonging to the New York Central Railroad Company. "As he stood there, at the end of the board, poised for his dive into the stream, electric wires fell upon him, and swept him to his death below." The wires were maintained by the Railroad Company for the operation of its trains. The boy's administratrix, in charge of his estate, tried to recover damages for his death, claiming that the Railroad Company had been careless in maintaining its wires. Two New York Courts said she could get no damages even if the Railroad Company had been careless; since the boy was a trespasser on the Company's property, and the Company had no duty to take care to make its premises safe for him.

The administratrix appealed to the Court of Appeals. Among other arguments, her lawyer urged that the boy was like a traveler on a public highway, who naturally goes a little off the road onto adjacent land. The courts have held that the owners of land adjacent to highways must use reasonable care to make their land safe for travelers who naturally go a little off the way. If you carelessly leave on your land an unprotected hole right next to a highway, and a person who is not himself acting carelessly drives a car into it on a dark night, you must pay for the resulting damages. If the boy had been swimming in the stream at the moment of his death, this rule would have applied to his case. But he was standing on the board over the stream.

"The administratrix found the analogy that suited her in the position of travelers on a highway . . . The owner found the analogy to its liking in the position of a trespasser on land . . . Now, the truth is that, as a mere bit of dialectics, these analogies would bring a judge to an impasse. No process of merely logical deduction could determine the choice between them. Neither analogy is precise, though each is apposite. There had arisen a new situation which could not force itself without mutilation into any of the existing moulds. When we find a situation of this kind, the choice that will approve itself to this judge or to that

pp. 99-103. One of the quotations in the text is from the opinion and the others are from the book.

will be determined largely by his conception of the end of the law, the function of legal liability, and this question of ends and functions is a question of philosophy [ethics]."

In this situation, the philosophy of the lawyer for the administratrix won the day, and the decisions of the two lower courts were reversed by a four to three vote of the Court of Appeals. "We think there was no moment when he was beyond the pale of the defendant's duty," declared the majority opinion, "the duty of care and vigilance in the storage of destructive forces."

Legislative enactment has not infrequently helped in clarifying and developing the rules governing our everyday affairs. Such enactments, however, often become the basis of further judicial "construction" and development of the law. Legislatures cannot hope to provide for all the varied disputes which must be settled by the courts. Much of the ancient task of leavening the rules of the law with changing ideas of right must accordingly be entrusted to "the judges who decide and the lawyers who persuade." The work can be done most satisfactorily by a bench and bar with a thorough knowledge of ethical principles.

There are, indeed, limits to the extent to which ethical ideas will work themselves into law.[8] Unlike most legislation, judicial decisions apply to past transactions; and courts must be careful, particularly in dealing with property acquired and commercial transactions entered into on the faith of existing rules of law, not unfairly to upset "vested rights." In some situations it seems morally indifferent what rule of law shall be adopted; and the only requirement seems to be that there shall be a rule and that it shall be obeyed. Again certain moral duties can not be dealt with by courts, because of the limitations of legally trained intelligence and the peculiarities of legal procedure. Informed laymen and the best judges set limits to their faith in judicial ability wisely to strike out in new directions in the development of law. Legislatures have less need than courts of caution in innovation. Finally, we do not commonly trust judges with great discretion in administering the law. Uniformity, as far as it is humanly possible, is an essential quality of law; and it is prob-

[8] See Pound, *Law and Morals*, Ch. II, *passim*.

ably an inevitable result that sometimes legal rights are unfairly protected.

These qualifications, however, are probably not so rigid as some thinkers seem to suppose. And with all these limitations, our thesis remains true: Ethical ideas are of fundamental importance in the development and administration of law.

Sociology, economics, political science, and law, are thus like ethics in that they either have, or ought to have, two departments, one describing and explaining what is and has been, the other critical or normative in character, setting forth what ought to be. Many of the problems of the critical portions of these sciences are indeed purely technical; they are concerned solely with the discovery of the means best fitted to attain a predetermined end. Such a problem is that of the comparative merits of the city manager as against the old-fashioned mayor and council as an agency of efficient municipal government. But as soon as there arises in any problem of human affairs, whether technical or otherwise, a conflict between the interests of different parties, or the necessity of determining the value of different ends, there at once questions of moral rights make their appearance and moral considerations demand a hearing. And since the moral law claims sovereignty over all our significant actions, it must always have the last word.

It must not be supposed for a moment that ethics is in a position to supply us with a pass-key with which to open all these doors by a mere turn of the hand. One might as well argue that the possession of sailing orders on the part of the captain dispenses with the necessity of a knowledge of the art of navigation, and the use of compass, sextant, and chart. Unfortunately, too, the best sailing orders which ethics is capable of supplying take the form of rules sometimes so abstract that their application to concrete situations presents very serious difficulties. In what respect its insights are more definite than those of the ordinary man is precisely what we are to discover as we proceed. The moralist will insist that the directions which it supplies can be used to make conduct at once more consistent and more completely adapted to the demands of the situation. At the same

time, if he is wise, he will not allow the reader to suppose that there is being placed in his hands any of the much advertised substitutes for thought.

Before turning to our study of the problems of ethics a few words must be said about the subject of terminology. The term *right,* as commonly employed even with reference to moral phenomena, is unfortunately ambiguous. When I say, I am going to keep my promise because it is right to do so, *right* means that the refusal so to act would be blameworthy. A right action in this sense is commonly spoken of as a duty. Less frequently *right* is used to include the praiseworthy. It may be right in this sense for me to give liberally of my goods for the benefit of the city charities. Unfortunately it is sometimes used to mean the innocent or morally indifferent, as when I ask whether it is right to play cards for money. In this book I shall not employ *right* in this third sense at all. As will appear during the course of our study there is no real difference in principle between the first and the second meanings of the term. We praise a man for his intellectual qualities when they rise strikingly above the average of those with which we happen to be familiar. Similarly in the moral world; regard for other people's interests is praised when it represents a standard distinctly higher than that which prevails in the same community; otherwise it arouses no particular comment. The saint of a gang of thieves would be regarded as an undesirable citizen in a respectable village. Poor old Simon Lee, dragging out his solitary life among churlish neighbors, is overwhelmed with admiration and gratitude when Wordsworth does him a trivial favor. As a matter of fact, we are morally bound to do what is worthy of praise just as truly as we are that which is commonly called duty. In other words, we are bound to rise above mediocrity. Since the distinction between *right* in the first and second senses is thus, at bottom, artificial I shall use the same word to cover both.

*Right,* in the sense just indicated, and *ought* are essentially synonymous. But common speech makes a distinction between them which may be worth a moment's attention. In the *Atlantic Monthly* for May, 1916, in "Notes on Authors," there appeared a statement made by a man who had been a member of the

French Foreign Legion. He was invalided at the time of writing. But he declared the war had raised his spirits to such sublime heights that he longed to get back to the trenches. Contrast this statement with the letter written by a New England College boy to his sister upon his enlistment in the Union Army in the Civil War. "I frankly tell you I do most heartily wish I could stay at home; it has cost me a great deal of suffering to give up my college course; but I consider the question simply a test of my courage and manliness; I believe the cause for which this war is undertaken is a just and politic one, that it needs a million hands to carry it on, and that every man that is free from the burden of supporting others ought to give up his time, the furtherance of his own plans, and, if need be, his life, to help in assuring the ultimate triumph of this cause." The right, we see, may be done with joy or accepted with sorrow and shrinking of spirit. In the latter case we commonly say we shall act thus because we feel we ought. *Ought,* then, points to the recognition of a course of action as right, this recognition qualified by a shrinking from the action as involving effort, loss, or suffering. Duty and obligation are often used in the same sense. It is possible a specialist in linguistics could detect additional differences in meaning between these words, but the discussion of this subject would belong rather to the dictionary than to a work on ethics. The fundamental term is clearly *right;* and this it is which I shall employ throughout the following study.

We may distinguish between judgments of right and judgments of good. The first are reducible to the form: The action A is right (or wrong); the second to the form, the experience A is good, in the sense of worth having (or bad, in the sense of worthy of avoidance). But in ordinary usage they are called *moral judgments* and *judgments of value,* and these are the terms I shall commonly employ.

The moral judgment may be conceived of as involving three parties. A man, for example, breaks a promise. There are the promisor A, the promisee B, and the person C who judges A's conduct to be wrong. The person who acts I shall usually speak of as "the agent." The person who is acted upon I may sometimes refer to as "the patient." The third party, who condemns or

approves, I shall call "the judge." It goes without saying that the moral judgment does not require the presence of three *persons,* for A may be not only agent but also judge of his own conduct; and B may be not merely patient but also judge of A's conduct.

The subject of our study is not primarily, at any rate, the sophisticated conscience of the special student of ethics; it is rather that of the ordinary man who is uninfluenced, at least in any direct way, by the theories of moralists. This man I shall call "the layman;" his judgments I shall speak of as "lay judgments," and his conscience as the "lay conscience."

# *Book I*

# THE RIGHT

## Chapter II

# EVERYDAY STANDARDS OF RIGHT

Ethics, as we have seen, attempts to describe our judgments of right, to explain them in the sense of showing whence they arise and how they come to be what they are, and finally, in case it should turn out that there is more than one type, to determine, if possible, which is valid or "correct." In such a program description is always fundamental. We accordingly begin our systematic study of these judgments with an account of them as we find them in the men and women about us, and shall seek to determine, first, the nature of the standard or standards which lie at their foundation. A standard of moral judgment is that to which an action must conform if it is to be called right. It represents some characteristic or quality of actions which, if possessed, will lead the judge to approve them. What this characteristic is, or what these characteristics are, we have now to inquire.

### Rival Accounts of Everyday Standards of Moral Judgment

Two very different accounts of the layman's standards will be found in the writings of moralists. To understand their significance we must remember that a very considerable part of our duty is presented to us in our youth by our parents or other members of society in the form of general rules, such as, "Thou shalt not steal;" "Thou shalt tell the truth." According to one account these rules appeal immediately to the layman as right, and that is all there is to be said about the subject. He perceives no gain for any human being or for society as a whole as a consequence of the act, and he asks for none. When, for example, he pronounces the keeping of a certain promise right he does not think of the benefits that will accrue through this act either to the promisee or to society as a whole; or if he does, such considerations do not affect his judgment as to the morality of the act. Accordingly the question of what it is right or wrong to do

in a given situation can only be determined by asking whether the proposed action can be subsumed under some general law, as that against theft, lying, or uncharitableness of judgment. A large number of contemporary writers on ethics, representing in other respects very different schools of thought, would regard the above description as essentially correct.

According to the rival view judging an action to be wrong involves the belief that it will harm some person, persons, or group of persons within the range of its effects, or else deprive them of some advantage or good. Similarly an action is judged right in virtue of the fact that it is believed to be calculated to confer benefit upon or prevent harm to some or all of those whose interests it will affect.

Most of those who accept the first view hold what I shall call the social pressure theory of the moral consciousness. They believe that the moral judgments of the overwhelming majority of human beings, the members of civilized society as well as of primitive races, are borrowed property; in other words, that such judgments are what have been called "imitative," as distinguished from "original."[1] The average layman, it is claimed, accepts the fact that certain things are right and others wrong in blind deference to the authority of public opinion; just as a man who is tone deaf might assent to the statement of the connoisseur that Beethoven's symphonies are masterpieces of musical composition. It may indeed be true that the seer, or the special student, or perhaps the layman of exceptional intelligence and habits of reflection is aware of the intimate relation which actually obtains between human welfare and the acts commonly approved or condemned. But this has been hidden from babes and revealed only to the wise and prudent. According to this theory the moral standards of the race consist in a jumble of rules, without organic relation to each other, reducible, possibly, to five or six in number, or perhaps running up into the hundreds or even thousands.

[1] McDougall, *Social Psychology*, p. 216. The social pressure theory is subjected to a direct examination in Chapter XII, below. An alternative theory which reaches the same conclusion by a very different route is discussed under the name of Intuitionism in Chapter XVI. It once played a very important rôle but now has few adherents.

In contradiction to such a view, this Chapter will contend that in civilized society at any rate the great body of our moral judgments is based upon the belief that the conduct in question is conducive to the welfare or harm, as the case may be, of some conscious being or beings thereby affected. This does not mean necessarily that the layman has discovered this relationship by his own unaided powers, but merely that whether with or without the help of others, he more or less clearly sees it himself. The evidence upon which this contention is based is as follows.

### The Principal Standard of Moral Judgment

There are innumerable actions, performed by us every day of our lives, which have no appreciable effect upon the welfare of anyone, self or others, such as walking on the left-hand sidewalk of the street instead of the right-hand one, looking in at shop windows in passing, whittling a stick in an idle hour, and thousands more. These, with rare exceptions which will be explained later,[2] no one ever thinks of condemning as wrong or approving as right. This is equally true of similar actions which are the object of a certain amount of social pressure because dictated by fashion or custom. Twenty-five years ago, when conventions in dress were such that the average man would as soon have thought of appearing on the street without his hat as without his shoes, a male pedestrian proceeding hatless down the main street of a certain city was captured by the police and sent to a nearby hospital for the insane, from which it was supposed he must have escaped. The point is that he was not sent to jail. The man who in breaking a custom does no harm may be criticized as trying to attract attention, or as proclaiming himself by implication wiser or more imaginative than his neighbors; or he may be regarded as eccentric even to the point of insanity; but as long as he is believed to injure no one by his eccentricities he will not be regarded as a wrong-doer.

Actions, then, which are believed to harm no one are not regarded as wrong; actions believed to benefit no one are not called right. On the other hand, those which are denominated wrong are supposed to have harmful effects, and those denominated right,

[2] See below, Chapter X.

to have beneficial effects. A, for example, asks B a question. C, the judge, will commend the action if B tells the truth, and condemn it if B lies. C is, of course, throughout perfectly aware that A wants to know that concerning which he has inquired—else why should he put the question—and that he will believe himself harmed, and presumably will in fact have been harmed, if he is not told the truth. Similarly when C condemns B for stealing from A he knows that A did not want to lose his property; otherwise, of course, B could have gone to A and asked for it as a gift. This holds likewise for the condemnation of murder, breach of contract, and whatever else may be included by the lay conscience under the prohibition, "Thou shalt not."

The above principle can be shown to hold even for cases which at first glance appear to contradict it. Nothing seems farther from the calculations of utility than our applause of courage. But with a few exceptions which will be discussed in their place,[3] we do not demand the risking of life or limb or other valued possessions when it promises no gain in good attained or evil repelled. When after the close of the Spanish-American War it was proposed to keep the American troops in Cuba all summer, Colonel Roosevelt, protesting against this order, wrote: "If there were any object in keeping us here we would face yellow fever with as much indifference as we faced bullets."[4] Few persons would think less of a man for making such a protest and for attempting by every legitimate means, in circumstances such as these, to get into the safety zone.

When, as the result of an exceptional combination of circumstances, modes of action commonly injurious, whether to the individuals primarily affected or to society as a whole, become either innocuous or positively beneficial the judgment commonly changes, and what was hitherto called wrong is now looked upon as innocent, or sometimes positively praiseworthy. The Santa Claus lie is commonly told to children without a qualm of conscience. "It gives the children pleasure and never does them any harm," is the justification urged if the practice is challenged. The "polite lie," told to spare another person's feelings, is as

[3] Chapter X, page 158.

[4] James Morgan, *Theodore Roosevelt, the Boy and the Man*, p. 146.

widespread and as little an object of disapprobation among the great majority of people. Lies of playful teasing such as those told by Mark Twain to his companion Harris in *The Tramp Abroad* are described to excite merriment in the reader. But no author tries to play the humorist by narrating how a trusted employee, immediately upon the death of his employer, tries to swindle the widow out of the business. In certain cases a lie is positively approved by a large portion of the community. If the reader will put to a number of his acquaintances Desdemona's dying lie, and the action of the friends at the close of Kipling's "Thrown Away" (in *Plain Tales from the Hills*), he will be able to verify this statement for himself.

What is true of lying is true of theft. A well-known man of science tells a group of his fellow-workers how on leaving a vineyard which did not belong to him but in which he had been helping himself to as many grapes as he had cared to eat, he is met by a second depredator who supposes him to be the owner and thereupon, in great confusion, offers him twenty-five cents for the grapes which he had been taking. This story is received with shouts of laughter. A favorite topic of conversation on steamers returning from Europe is accounts of the successful smuggling of dutiable articles on previous trips. These men think with a wealthy manufacturer who, in stating quite openly to a friend that he had cut his income tax in half by making false returns, added that since no one had been injured thereby his conscience was clear in the matter. When a man reduces a widow or orphan to beggary by fraud he does not tell his friends or acquaintances about it. But the State of Wisconsin and Uncle Sam are "so rich that a few dollars more or less will never be missed;" accordingly there is no reason for concealment. Indeed, "swiping," especially on the part of undergraduates, is done primarily that one may boast of it afterwards to his friends. Even in serious cases theft committed to save the hungry from starvation will be approved by nineteen persons out of twenty.

It must be understood that I am here describing, not what people do, but what they are willing to have others know they do, and what we may therefore assume they do without self-condemnation. I am describing, in other words, not actions but moral

judgments. Again I am not justifying these judgments—in fact some of them I am convinced can not be justified. I am describing them as they are to be found in the community about us.

As our judgments change from approbation to condemnation and *vice versa* with changes in the nature of the consequences, so does the *amount* of our commendation or disapprobation tend to be proportionate to the amount of good or harm believed to have been done. Even those who thoroughly disapprove of smuggling goods through the custom house are not likely to be so indignant at it as they are at the action of the employee who robs the widow of his employer. The general principle comes out very clearly in our attitude towards murder. Death ordinarily seems to us the greatest of all evils because it is irreparable. In accordance with this opinion, murder is regarded as the most wicked of all crimes.

### An Examination of Some Apparent Exceptions

The preceding statements represent facts, but not all the facts. There are people who take a very different attitude towards obedience to general rules. There are a few parents who consider it wrong to tell children that Santa Claus brings their Christmas presents; there are a few people who do not believe in polite lies; there are those who would condemn the well-meant efforts of the Colonel in "Thrown Away" to spare the parents in England pain by writing them that their boy in distant India died of fever, when in reality he committed suicide because he believed (incorrectly) that he had disgraced himself. Similarly there are people—largely they will be the same persons—who condemn Jean Valjean's theft of bread from the bakeshop. These thoroughgoing upholders of the strict rule are apparently distinctly in the minority, but they certainly exist. How can their attitude be explained if the descriptions just given are accurate?

For this phenomenon two different explanations may be offered. Between them I believe they cover all but a few sporadic cases which most readers would find at once tedious and unprofitable to consider.[5] For the sake of concreteness I shall discuss the subject

[5] Those interested in these details may consult the author's *Influence of Custom on the Moral Judgment*, Ch. V.

in terms of veracity, although anyone of a half-dozen other illustrations would have served just as well.

In the first place, there is the consideration which everyone has had to face who has stepped across the boundary which separates truth from falsehood: Where is one to draw the line? For while much might be said in behalf of the first lie, presently a situation will arise where the case for lying is just a little less clear, and from this you may pass by a series of imperceptible gradations to what everyone would admit was an outrageous falsehood. There are people who feel that no one who begins to travel this road will ever be able to tell just where to stop, and that, therefore, the only safe course is never to start.

In the second place, we are creatures of habit, and the world did not have to wait for the discovery of this fact till the arrival of the psychologist upon the scene. Practically everyone knows that a lie told with whatever good intentions, tends to establish a habit of deviation from truth. Our intellect may assure us without ceasing of the rectitude of our course. Nevertheless the habit goes on fastening itself upon us till the time comes when we discover, perhaps by some flash of moral lightning, that we have absolutely lost all sense of direction. This consideration is not identical with the preceding one. It would hold even if the line between the justifiable and unjustifiable lie could be drawn with perfect clearness, and means that the lie told whether with good intentions or with bad, tends to register itself in the nervous system and make truth-telling progressively more difficult. "It is easy to tell one lie, but difficult to tell only one."

To these considerations the more thoughtful will add the effects of example. Everyone knows that we go astray like lost sheep. One jumps through a gap in the hedge because the others have done so. The recognition of this peculiarity of human nature tends to make the reflective mind cautious about approving even what many men call harmless lies. He will consider that the lie itself may become known, while perhaps the excellent reason for telling it remains hidden from view. "Avoid the very appearance of evil" is a rule whose reasonableness is obvious to any conscientious man.

What is common to all these considerations is the knowledge

that lies tend to breed lies. But this is by no means the end. Everyone knows that we lose confidence in the veracity of one whom we find lying to us; and that this is true to a certain extent regardless of the motive of the lie. Thus the physician tells the family that the patient will recover, whereas, in reality, he expects nothing of the kind. If the family discover that they have been deceived they can no longer believe this doctor's statements about the condition of the sick who are under his charge; and moreover will be likely to argue that if one doctor lies about the condition of his patients all will lie. Thus in discrediting himself he is discrediting many others also.

The above reasons for refusing to admit exceptions to the rule of veracity may operate not merely when present as clean-cut formulas but equally when they loom as vague impressions. In every field of human experience it happens that judgments are formed, the data for which are forgotten while the conclusion is preserved. You have come to dislike a man because you have perhaps on two or three occasions seen him discourteous or grossly selfish. Later the incidents are forgotten but the impression remains that he is essentially a boor. We frequently find ourselves distrusting a man of a certain appearance as probably lazy, or sensual, or irresponsible, or selfish, or "crooked," without being able to tell explicitly what are the signs of the characteristic we attribute to him, and how many of them he possesses. In the same way an experienced business man comes to "feel" that an investment is unsafe, and a salesman, that such and such a person will not buy his goods. Indeed most of those beliefs which rest upon a large body of data collected at different times and in different places are of this nature.

All this applies, of course, to moral principles. Everyone has seen one lie breed another. Everyone has seen confidence shattered and replaced by distrust. There is no one who has not had occasion to discover through his own experience the seriousness of these consequences. Some generalize consciously; most do not. But all may come to "feel" a hesitancy about lying which is just as completely the product of observation of cause and effect as is the experienced business man's unwillingness to risk his money in certain kinds of investments.

We see thus how a belief in the harmfulness of breaking general rules may arise. We see also that the process to which it is due, whether it goes on above or below the surface of consciousness, may be a perfectly legitimate one. Sometimes, however, while the conclusion may be sound, the process by which it is reached may be thoroughly fallacious. In these instances, the judge demands an unqualified obedience because he can not conceive it possible to preserve the rule if you permit a single exception. He understands the value of the rule perfectly. But he is unable to distinguish between its different applications to varying conditions and to see that "circumstances alter cases." An example is an exceptionally dull-witted and illiterate youth, who, in a study carried on by means of casuistry questions, was asked whether Jean Valjean was justified in stealing bread to save from starvation his widowed sister and her children. He wrote: "No. If it was not wrong for him to steal then it would not be wrong for anybody, and in this way would all go stealing when in need." When later he was asked: "Suppose all did go stealing when in need. What of it?" he looked at his questioner in blank surprise at such a display of ignorance and replied at once: "Why, if everybody stole, everything would go to smash." [6]

There are, accordingly, two classes of persons who are reluctant to approve the making of exceptions to general rules. One of these is composed of the more intelligent and thoughtful. They have become impressed by the seriousness of the consequences which may follow such an infraction. The other consists largely of those who are less acute mentally. For them but two alternatives are conceivable: obedience or anarchy. Those who are fond of observing human nature will recall charming examples of just this kind of logic in the mental processes of eight-year-old children.

[6] For some parallel instances from the field of worldly wisdom, see Coe, *Psychology of the Religious Experiences,* p. 68; also *ibid.,* pp. 74, 77, 81. Beautiful illustrations of this kind of abstract thinking in the moral judgments of children will be found in David Snedden's article "Children's Attitude toward Punishment for Weak Time Sense," in Earl Barnes' *Studies in Education,* Vol. I, p. 344. See also below, Chapter XV, page 303.

### Our Conclusion and Its Meaning

The conclusion which these facts seem to warrant is that when an action is pronounced wrong this is ordinarily because it is believed to do harm to some or all of those affected by it; when it is pronounced right, this is because its effects are regarded as beneficial. This statement is subject to an important exception which will be considered immediately, and some apparent exceptions which will be examined in Chapter X. Apart from this, it gives, I believe, a true picture of the workings of the conscience of civilized man. If so, those moralists who believe the moral consciousness to be a piece of putty which can be moulded by outside pressure into any form, however fantastic, very seriously underestimate the amount of original judgments in the community about us.

All this does not mean that the ordinary man, in forming his moral judgments, is everywhere saying to himself in so many words: "All actions which harm another are wrong; this harms another; therefore it is wrong." Most laymen have presumably never thought of any such generalization as the first of these premises. This, as far as it is true, is rather the discovery of the moralist. What is meant is that in so far as a man sees harm done by an action in a particular case he tends to call that action wrong; in so far as he sees positive good resulting he tends to call the action right; when he sees no appreciable connection with good or harm he regards it as morally indifferent or innocent. Where moral rules arise they are generalizations of judgments passed upon particular situations. This is true for the life of the race as a whole. It would also be true for the individual if it were not for the efforts of parents, teachers, and society at large, who put the finished generalizations into his hands; thereby of course facilitating the process and making it in many cases far more complete and definite than it would otherwise have become.

### "Eye for Eye; Tooth for Tooth"

If the readers of this book were asked whether they believe in revenge, most of them would probably reply that they do not.

But there is a great difference between what we believe, and what we believe we believe; and it is probable that at least two out of every three adult Americans, if brought face to face with some monstrous exhibition of baseness or cruelty, would demand that vengeance be visited upon the offender as a requirement of justice. This demand for vengeance is not necessarily identical with the approval of punishment. Punishment may be approved for its beneficent consequences. It may awaken in the evil-doer a sense of the enormity of his deed, and thus make him a better man; or if it does not accomplish so much, it may at least frighten him into a different course of life. In any event it will tend to deter others from committing similar deeds. But the belief that the wicked ought to be punished may have a far different source from the aim to reform and the aim to frighten. From the depths of a man's nature may arise the demand that he who has caused another to suffer be made to suffer in return, not as a means to some ulterior end but as an end in itself. This is the voice of retributive justice, the call for vengeance as a sacred duty.

Primitive man believes that revenge may be inflicted by the victim or his family. Indeed, under ordinary circumstances, it must be one of these because there is no one else to serve as avenger. In civilized society, also, there are many who share this belief, particularly where other agencies can not be invoked. On the other hand there are those among ourselves who while approving retributive punishment as such believe that it should be exercised solely by the state. Their reason is that it alone is likely to be able and willing to inform itself as to the facts, and impartial in weighing guilt and assigning the penalty. Some, again, would confine the administration of retributive punishment to the one omniscient and perfectly impartial judge, God.

This demand that suffering be requited with suffering may be directed against self as well as others. In this case the person feels he ought to injure himself, or, at least, put himself in a position where some other person or else the state will injure him because of the wrong which is the work of his hands. This feeling may lead him to thrust away from himself proffered happiness on the ground that he is unworthy of it, as does Richard Feverel

after the return of his love for his wife, in Meredith's novel.[7] It has been known to lead unsuspected criminals to surrender themselves to the authorities for punishment. It appears in childhood equally with adult life. Witness the following incident, told by Sully in his *Studies of Childhood* (page 289). "A girl of nine had been naughty and was very sorry for her misbehavior. Shortly after she came to her lesson limping and remarked that she felt very uncomfortable. Being asked by her governess what was the matter with her she said: 'It was very naughty of me to disobey you, so I put my right shoe on my left foot, and my left shoe on my right foot.' " Such occurrences are not at all uncommon in childhood, as appears from Tadaichi Ueda's study, "The Psychology of Justice," in Volume 19 of the *Pedagogical Seminary*.

We must distinguish between retribution as a right and a duty. The former means that the wronged is at liberty to injure the wrong-doer if he so wishes, but is under no moral compulsion to do it. The latter means that it is the duty of someone or some group to punish, whether there is any desire on the part of anyone to do it or not. In all stages of human development revenge is widely regarded as not merely a right, but under certain circumstances a duty; often, indeed, one of the most imperative of duties.

In our own society there exist radical differences of opinion with regard to almost every aspect of revenge. Some approve it —at least in its application to other persons than self—on the slightest provocation; others only in the case of very grave wrongs; while of course all the intermediate positions are fully represented. But it must be particularly noted that there are some persons who repudiate retribution in every one of its forms, regarding it always, everywhere, and under every provocation as wrong. The proportion of such people in contemporary American society, however, is apparently not very large. Some years ago the author, in collaboration with his colleague, Professor Otto, made a careful investigation of this subject. The material

[7] So Emma, in Jane Austen's novel of the same name, Ch. XLVIII; *cf.* Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, Act V, Scene IV, ll. 14, 15.

was supplied by two groups of students. One was composed of 100 members of the first-year class in the Short Course in Agriculture in the University of Wisconsin, practically none of whom had had any formal education beyond the grades. The second was made up of fifty men and fifty women from the three upper classes of the College of Letters and Science in the same institution; all of them, of course, entirely innocent of any acquaintance with theories of ethics. The proportion (in percentages) of each group who definitely expressed their approbation of revenge in some one of a number of concrete situations was as follows: In the College of Letters and Science, men, 64, women, 80; in the College of Agriculture, 90. But apart from its conscious acceptance the law of retaliation was found to be an unrecognized but real factor in the judgments of a number of others. The change in the figures for the College of Letters and Science was of no special significance. The percentage for men rose to 70 and that for women to 82. But in the Agricultural Course it left but two unaffected, bringing the total from 90 to 98 per cent. It was shown, I believe, that these proportions are typical for the class of persons investigated.[8]

### Eudemonic and Dysdemonic Judgments

It will be convenient to have separate names for the two standards of judgment described in this Chapter. I shall call the first *eudemonic.*[9] It approves conduct for its good effects and disapproves it for its harmful effects. For the second standard I shall use the term *dysdemonic.* It reverses the relationship of good and harm found in the first, in that it approves of doing harm and disapproves of doing good to one who has wronged another, not as a means to some farther end, such as the protection of society or even the satisfaction it may afford to the victim of the wrong, but as an end in itself. The judgments which conform to

[8] *The International Journal of Ethics,* Vol. 20, 1910, pp. 341, 438. Two of the questions used in this investigation, and a brief account of the method employed will be found below, Chapter XII, page 206 ff.

[9] From the Greek word *eudaimonia,* meaning welfare. *Dysdaimonia,* similarly meant misfortune or harm. Daimon meant a tutelary deity; *eu* and *dys,* good and bad, respectively.

these two standards may also be called more simply judgments of benevolence and malevolence respectively. The significance of the latter terminology will be clear after reading Chapter V.

### The Influence of Religious Belief Upon Moral Judgments

You may find it interesting to ask a number of persons whether a physician is justified in administering an overdose of morphine to a patient who is suffering unimaginable torture in the last stages of cancer. In the course of your inquiry you will probably receive three types of answers, the conformity of two of which to the eudemonic standard will be manifest at a glance. Some will reply that the physician is justified in hastening the death of the patient because he would relieve him and his family of unnecessary suffering and would not harm anyone thereby. Others will contend that a physician who starts on this road will never know where to stop, and that a society which sanctioned such practices would be opening the door to the gravest abuses. But a certain proportion will reply in substantial agreement with the following statement, supplied by a Wisconsin undergraduate: "I do not think it would be right under any circumstances to take a person's life before the appointed time. If a Supreme Power exists, and it places those sufferings on a person, it must be for the best, and, therefore, the person is not justified in taking his life away."

This answer looks, at first sight, like the introduction of an entirely different standard from any yet described. It undoubtedly represents a new point of view, but certainly not a new standard. For the writer of this answer believed that all suffering of whatever kind is due to the will of a loving God who lays affliction upon a man not in indifference, least of all out of a malevolent desire to see him suffer, but in the sufferer's own interest, particularly as a preparation for citizenship in a higher world. It is evident that, accepting this view of the facts as he did, the respondent could only look upon the well-meant efforts of the physician to ease the pain as any impartial person would regard the attempts of a weak mother to save her son from the discipline requisite for his future success. In other words, the ultimate standard here in use is precisely that of the eudemonic

judgment, applied, in this instance, to the interests of a life beyond the grave.

Sometimes the theological factor enters in another fashion. It may be enough for one who really loves God and believes that God desires a certain mode of action on his part to regard this action as a duty. Here again a parallel case will show that no new standard enters. A boy at college (if there be such a boy) refrains from smoking in deference to the wishes of his mother. He may not know precisely why she desires it; if he does, he may not sympathize with her point of view. But respect, love, and gratitude make him feel an obligation to do what will please her, to leave undone what would cause her pain. Obviously the same attitude may be taken towards the will of God, conceived of as the Heavenly Father. Again it is a case of the eudemonic judgment.

There is still a third way in which religious belief may affect a moral judgment. If I am considering such a question as the justifiability of revenge, I may either rely on my immediate feelings, or reason it out as best I can, or I may consult an expert precisely as I might in any other field besides morals. If I believe the Bible to be a revelation of God to man, I may consult it and accept its dictum. This procedure, again, involves the introduction of no new standard. It involves nothing else than the adoption of an imitative judgment, on the word of an authority not, like the best of my fellow-men, finitely wiser, but infinitely wiser than I.

Theological considerations may enter into the fabric of our moral judgments in one or two other ways besides those here described. But the above enumeration includes all the leading cases. The introduction of the theological point of view brings into the field factors which may be of great importance in determining the final attitude of the judge, but it does not involve the use of any new standard of judgment.

### Utilitarian Theories of Ethics

A very influential school of moralists hold that all moral judgments are of the eudemonic type. This view is commonly called Utilitarianism.

There are two varieties of Utilitarianism. One, called Egoistic Utilitarianism, holds that the only motive for moral action is the prospect of good for oneself. This same motive force is supposed to be capable of bringing into existence judgments of praise and blame. The other form is called Universalistic Utilitarianism. It recognizes the existence of other springs of action in human nature besides egoism, and finds in these the source of the moral judgment.

The attitude of Utilitarians towards the dysdemonic judgment is, for the most part, so equivocal that it can not be easily stated in a few words. The great majority ignore it—the simplest known method of treating awkward facts that refuse to fit themselves into your system of thought. As for the minority, their methods of dealing with or evading the issue are so varied and sometimes so elusive that it will be impossible as it would be unprofitable for us to examine them.

If we hold rigidly to the traditional definitions the account of the moral judgment presented in this Chapter can not be called Utilitarian, because it recognizes the existence of a type of judgment unknown to orthodox Utilitarianism, namely the dysdemonic. But if we use the term in a somewhat larger sense we shall obtain a different result. For the essential feature of Utilitarianism, after all, is the proposition that conduct is pronounced right or wrong solely in virtue of its effects upon human welfare. That this is the case is precisely the outcome of the preceding analysis. The conclusion drawn from our examination of the lay conscience is that there exist two, and at bottom only two fundamental standards of moral judgments; one used under ordinary circumstances, the other applied by some judges to some wrongdoers. According to the former standard an action is wrong if its consequences are harmful; according to the latter it is right for precisely this reason. Thus the contents, so to speak, of the two standards are identical; the relation to good and harm determines the judgment in each case. The difference is that the relationship which one standard calls right, the other calls wrong, and *vice versa*. In this broader and more fundamental sense of the term, then, the position of this Chapter is Utilitarian. Later chapters will defend the Universalistic form.

## Chapter III

# THE CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

### The Eudemonic Judgment and the Conflict of Interests

The eudemonic judgment pronounces an action right, as we have seen, in so far as it promises to promote the interests of some or all of those whom it affects. But the interests of human beings may conflict at an indefinite number of points. Unless I have an unlimited amount of money, contributing to some causes means withholding from others. Precisely the same thing is true of time and energy. If on failing in business I divide my assets equally among my creditors, some will receive less than if I had paid a few favored ones in full. And if I pay up every cent when I might evade complete payment, my family may have to suffer. If the physician refuses to give an overdose of morphine to a cancer patient he is sacrificing the individual to the good of the community. While if he yields to the entreaties of the sufferer he may be injuring the community for the sake of the individual. A lie, a breach of contract, an act of dishonesty, may profit the liar or the thief, at least in certain respects, while it injures both the immediate victim and the community.

Now the moralist can not insist with too much earnestness that much of this conflict of interests is mere appearance, due to the short-sightedness of human beings and their inability to see below the surface of things. In the great majority of cases it is unquestionably to my advantage in the long run to tell the truth, and to respect in every way the property rights of others, because (for one thing) the confidence of my fellows is more valuable than any immediate gain. Nine-tenths of the lying that goes on in the world is demonstrably mere weakness or folly. Again experience has shown that the employer's profits are greatest when he so treats his employees that they are contented and loyal. To take the extreme case—slavery in the United States was at bottom a huge failure from an economic point of view because it

offered no adequate incentive for hard and intelligent labor. On the other hand, if wages were forced, say by legislative action, beyond the point where the return on the investment fell below the safety line, the enterprise might fail in time of stress for want of a sufficient surplus. This might easily be a misfortune for the employees as well as the employers.

Where the divergence of interests has at first glance seemed hopeless, an ingenious mind and a determined will have again and again found an unexpected way, not of compromise, but of genuine reconciliation. And it is obviously our duty to discover such ways, wherever possible. But with all due recognition of these facts, it would be mere sentimentalism or prejudice to assert that harmony is the universal rule. Of two suitors one must be rejected. And it would be difficult to prove to the dismissed lover that he will speedily find a substitute, who, after all, will do "just as well." In any event people have believed and do believe that interests conflict. And what concerns us in this descriptive part of our work, is the principles which men actually follow in determining which of two interests or sets of interests that are regarded as irreconcilable, has the prior claim to satisfaction. The problem, as it presents itself to the agent, may be the claims of self-interest as opposed to the interests of another or others; or the claims upon him of two or more persons or groups of persons. In either case he may be compelled to choose between the good of one person and the good of another, or the harm of one and the harm of another, or still again between the good of one and the harm of another.

These conflicts of interests supply the subject matter of the present Chapter. It attempts to set forth certain principles upon which men proceed when, in applying the eudemonic standard, they find themselves compelled to decide which of two conflicting interests or sets of interests has "the right of way." Those here described are four in number.

### The Primacy of the Greater Good

In the first place, it may be held that one ought to choose the greater good, or where harm or loss is inevitable, the less harm. Or where goods are compared on a scale of quality, it may be

held that the higher good should be chosen in preference to the lower. What is common to these two forms of judgment is the fact that the relative claims of the competing goods are determined by the place of each on a scale of values, whether of quantity or quality. That is to say, the decisive factor is found in the nature of the interests themselves, apart from the persons whose interests they may happen to be.

As illustrations, if illustrations are necessary, I shall use certain answers to casuistry questions supplied by University of Wisconsin undergraduates during the course of an investigation made by the author, the results of which appeared in the monograph already referred to, *The Influence of Custom on the Moral Judgment,* published by the University of Wisconsin in 1908.

One of these questions was a variant upon the theme struck out by Victor Hugo in *Les Miserables.*

> May a poor man, without money, out of work, and unable at the time to find employment, take without the knowledge of the owner a loaf of bread from a bakeshop in order to save from starvation the young children of a neighbor? Their mother, a widow, is sick in bed and unable for the time to earn money for their support. It is impossible to get the bread in any other way.

The following are two typical answers:

> [1] "I think that the poor man was justified in taking the bread under these circumstances. He would be doing an infinitely large amount of good compared with the trivial harm done, and he would be doing the good by the only possible method open to him."
>
> [2] "The man should not steal the bread. Respect for the property of others, under all circumstances, lies at the basis of our civilization. To indulge, in any degree, in wrong makes greater wrong easier and ultimate anarchy possible."

In [1] the writer is comparing the value of the bread to the baker with its value to the starving family. In [2] there is also an estimate of the relative importance of consequences. What chiefly impresses the writer is the shock to the system of mutual confidence produced by any theft, whatever the circumstances. Since the form of the question necessarily thrusts before his mind the good which the bread will do, it seems clear that here also, there is a virtual balancing of consequences. The negative answers, which seldom amount to more than five per cent of

the whole number, almost always take some such form as the above.

In the first answer to the next question the comparison of values is carried out still more elaborately than in the corresponding answer above. In the second there is the same implied comparison as in [2] of the first problem.

A university student hires a room for a year. After four weeks, when there is no longer any probability of its being taken by anyone else, he leaves and goes to another room. Is this justifiable under any of the following conditions? (1) He is lonely and wishes to go to a house several blocks away where some of his friends are lodging. (2) He is working his way through the University and an opportunity offers itself to get room rent in return for an exceptionally small amount of service. He could earn enough to put himself through in other ways but the change will save him two hours a day, which will enable him to do very much better university work. Does the answer in (1) or (2) differ if we suppose that: (a) his present room belongs to a man sufficiently well situated so that he and his family will not actually suffer at the loss of the rent; or, (b) that it belongs to a widow with a young child and that she has no other means of support than the income from her rooms, representing, let us say, a net cash income of $1000 a year, which in case (1) will be reduced by $150 and in (2) by $75 if the lodger leaves.

[1] "Under condition (1) he would not be justified because he ought to have foreseen what the results would be, and then the results are of no great importance. Under conditions (2a) he might leave the place because the benefit of the student would be greater than the loss to the landlord. Case (2b) is different. There the widow is actually depending upon the room rent for support, while a change of rooms will only make things more convenient for the student. Therefore, it would be wrong for the student to leave the widow in the lurch."

[2] "Under none of the conditions described has the student a right to give up his room. The bottom would drop out of everything if you commenced to permit any contracts to be broken."

The essential feature of this principle then, is that it rates competing claims in accordance with the value of the experience to the parties concerned (which may include, of course, society as a whole), or according to the amount of the resultant good or harm. In order to identify the principle I shall give it a name and call it the principle of the primacy of the *greater good.*

### The Primacy of the More Striking Good

A good or evil which is completely and vividly realized, which impresses itself powerfully upon the imagination, is apt to throw

its rivals into the shade, and appeal to us more effectively than any other element in the situation, however important it may be in itself. Lecky writes:

"The most frightful catastrophe in South America, an earthquake, a shipwreck, or a battle, will elicit less compassion than the death of a single individual who has been brought prominently before our eyes. The irritation displayed by the captive of St. Helena in his bickerings with his gaoler affects most men more than the thought of the nameless thousands whom his insatiable egoism had hurried to the grave. Such is the frailty of our nature that we are more moved by the tears of some captive princess, by some trifling biographical incident that has floated down the stream of history, than by the sorrows of all the countless multitudes who perished beneath the sword of a Tamerlane or a Zenghis Khan."[1]

Parallel with this characteristic of the human mind we find that the more vividly a good is realized the higher do we rate its claims. This fact gives rise to an attitude or point of view which leads to the acceptance of what may be called the primacy of the *more striking good.*

The most important example of this attitude is the judgment wherein, frequently with perfect good faith, we justify ourselves for seeking our own good at the expense of another person, although what is lost by the latter in the transaction is recognized as being more valuable to him than what we thereby gain is to us. An illustration is supplied by certain of the answers to the question (page 40, above) whether the student was justified in breaking his contract with his landlady. A few respondents replied that he was justified in every instance, some asserting, in so many words, that he owed his first duty to himself. In maintaining this position they recognized clearly that under one or two of the conditions named the preponderance of good unmistakably lay on the other side.

In Chapter V we shall learn that the fundamental reason for our partiality to self is the fact that its interests usually appeal to the imagination more vividly and therefore more effectively than those of others. Hence the favoritism in behalf of self often found in the moral judgment when the demands of self-interest

[1] Lecky, *History of European Morals,* 3rd Edition, Vol. I, p. 133.

conflict with the good of our neighbor is an illustration of the approbation of the choice of the more striking good.

Another example of this power of the concrete and vivid to influence the judgment to favor its claims is the attitude taken by many persons when the good of the community as a whole clashes with that of an individual. This attitude is exhibited in the majority of the answers to the following question received from fifty men and fifty women who were students in the College of Letters and Science and 100 members of the Short Course in Agriculture of the University of Wisconsin.

Some two centuries ago an Indian chief, accompanied by a formidable band of warriors, suddenly appeared before the stockade of a remote French settlement in North America and demanded the surrender of one of its citizens. This man, the chief asserted, had murdered a member of his tribe, and he was accordingly determined to punish him. The governor protested, with truth, that his fellow-countryman was entirely innocent. But the Indian believed this statement to be a lie and threatened to attack the town and kill every soul in it if his demand was not met. The chances were fair that the settlement could hold out till help came, but of course an attack would make a large loss of life inevitable. The alleged murderer did not volunteer to surrender himself.

The decision lay entirely with the governor of the settlement as the representative of the king. He was a soldier of the highest type; one who, like the normal captain of a sinking ship, would not hesitate for a moment to face death for himself at the call of what he looked upon as duty. He must therefore be thought of as ignoring completely his own personal interests and deciding solely in accordance with what he regarded as right. There seemed to be no reason for supposing that the surrender demanded would create a dangerous precedent. The chief could be trusted to keep his word, whether to attack or to withdraw. Under these circumstances what ought the decision of the governor to have been?

To this question 48 per cent of the women students in Letters and Science, 58 per cent of the men, and 70 per cent of the Agricultural students answered that the governor ought not to surrender the man. This means that the majority of those questioned believed that in this instance the good of the many ought to be sacrificed to the good of one.

It is this attitude which leads a not inconsiderable number of persons to reject the view that punishment may properly be

inflicted for the sole end of deterring others from committing crime. Punishment, as we saw in Chapter II, page 31, may be visited upon the evil doer in a spirit of retaliation. On the other hand, it may be imposed because the threat of a penalty is calculated to prevent men from committing crime through fear of unpleasant consequences to self. If the threat is to be effective those who disregard it must be compelled to pay the penalty. Thus one murderer is executed or sent to the penitentiary for life in order than many other persons may be saved from becoming the victim of a murderer's hand. The view that a criminal may properly be made to suffer in order to deter others from committing crime through fear of like penalty is called the deterrent theory of punishment. It rests upon the principle that one man may rightly be compelled to suffer when, beyond all reasonable doubt, the community will thereby be saved from more serious evils.

Many of those who reject this principle look on with complete approbation when an individual voluntarily chooses to make a tremendous sacrifice for the realization of some important end. They reverse their position only when the sacrifice is a product of compulsion, as in the case of punishment.[2] To be sure when a man like Czolgosz murders the president of the United States in the full and sincere conviction that he is thereby serving his country, the public with one accord demands the imposition of the extreme penalty. But this attitude is probably due ultimately to resentment which—fortunately in this instance—is aroused by results as well as intentions (see below Chapter V, page 89). In war, to be sure—such are the inconsistencies of which the human mind is capable—no one thinks of criticizing an order which sends a whole regiment to certain death that the rest of the army—and the nation—may be saved from destruction. But in the piping times of peace about two persons out of three will,

[2] The majority of such persons believe it praiseworthy for the man whose life is demanded by the Indian chief to surrender himself in order to save his fellow-citizens. That is to say, they regard the man who is willing to sacrifice himself for the sake of the many as morally more excellent than he who refuses to do so. On the other hand many of these same persons hold that the morally excellent have a better claim to exemption from evil than have the less excellent. Thus, in this case, it is the death of the more excellent which is approved.

at some point, refuse to tolerate the application of the same principle.

### The Primacy of the Good of the Nearer

In the third place it may be thought that where a member of the agent's family is one of the parties concerned, the agent ought to prefer the interests of this person to the interests of anyone else, even though the result is a net loss to all affected. The same attitude may be taken when the alternatives are the good of a friend and that of an acquaintance, a neighbor and a stranger, a fellow-countryman and a foreigner, a member of one's own race and a member of another race. In order to have a convenient term we may say the representatives of this point of view approve the choice of the *good of the nearer*. "Nearer" here means nearer to the agent in the sense that he feels bound to the individual in question by ties of affection, friendship, blood, personal gratitude, or congeniality of tastes and interests.

The last answer to the following question will illustrate what is meant.

A man returning from his day's work was crossing a railroad track near his home when he discovered a switch left open by a careless switchman. This he saw at once would mean death or injury to the several hundred people on a rapidly approaching train. At the same moment he saw his own child playing upon the track in front of the engine. He had time only to turn the switch and save the train or else to save the child. Which was it his duty to do?

[1] "His duty was to turn the switch, for every man is placed on this earth to further the interests of society. The train contained several hundred people among whom may have been surgeons, statesmen, and talented men, who were far more useful for the advancement of the human race than was this one child."

[2] "It was his duty to turn the switch and save the train. In this case he alone would be bereaved while otherwise hundreds of persons would feel a sorrow comparable with his own."

[3] "It was the man's duty to save his child. Our first obligations are to those of our own kind. A man sacrificing his own child to save another person's life would not be human."

The first two respondents approve the choice of the greater good, or rather the less harm. But their answers look at the situation from slightly different points of view. The writer of [1] thinks throughout in terms of the interests of society as a

whole. The writer of [2], on the other hand, thinks only of the interests immediately concerned, in particular the sorrow of those who would be bereaved through the death of their loved ones. He confines his attention to the immediate *dramatis personæ* of the tragedy. These differences in attitude and point of view may easily be found in the community about us. No one of course looks at every question either from the one point of view alone or the other. But many persons' minds move predominantly in the one direction or the other. Indeed, broadly speaking, these differences are found to be characteristic not merely of individuals but also of whole peoples. An American, for example, is more apt to take the latter point of view, a German, the former.

In each case, however, the choice approved is that of the less harm of those whose interests catch and hold the attention. The third answer, on the other hand, represents the use of an entirely different principle. It is true that conceivably this answer might be a form of the first. A man might reason thus: The welfare of society as a whole, the greater good, in short, will be most effectively furthered by everyone looking after his own family first; as it is said that the streets of Jerusalem were kept clean by everyone sweeping in front of his own door. An occasional individual does take this point of view. But a carefully conducted inquiry by means of personal interviews has shown that this hypothesis does not explain the majority of the answers of this sort. In fact the writer of [3], and many others like him, never thought of any such relationship. It appeared to them directly self-evident that a member of one's family has a greater claim upon him than any number of outsiders; and the consideration of what course of action would prevent the greater harm seemed to them, in this situation, entirely irrelevant.

### The Primacy of the Good of the More Excellent

The fourth and last form of the eudemonic judgment which I shall describe in this Chapter may be stated thus: The good of those who are worthy of admiration ought to be preferred to the good of those who are less worthy. When the excellence in question is moral, we say that the treatment which a man receives

ought to be proportionate to his merit or desert. Thus when, in the study already referred to, the question was asked whether John Howard was justified in prosecuting his work of prison reform at the cost of the moral ruin of his son, one man answered with an emphatic "No," qualified by this proviso: "If the prisoners had been good men it would have been different."

The situation faced by the governor of the beleaguered settlement affords another illustration of the same principle. The problem of page 42 of this Chapter may be supplemented by the following question: Suppose the man demanded by the chief had been a man of very high character, or one of ordinary, commonplace character, that is to say, neither very good nor very bad, or finally a thoroughly selfish, unprincipled man, would any of these conditions make any difference in your answer? In other words, ought the decision to depend upon the kind of a person he was? In this formulation from fifteen to twenty per cent of those who had at first thought he ought not to be given up changed their position and said that if he was a bad man it would be right to surrender him. This point of view is by no means due to excessive sophistication. Many young children think it right to tell lies to a teacher whom they do not like because "she doesn't deserve to know the truth."

The belief that A's duties towards B depend upon B's excellence is by no means confined to moral excellence. Many persons take the same attitude toward any quality which really arouses their admiration. Thus B. L. Taylor once wrote in the Chicago *Tribune:* "Only the other day a distinguished pianist declared that an artist has the right to cancel [his engagement] at the last moment and let the local manager foot the bills." The position taken by the musician apparently was that the local manager was a mere business man, presumably a lover of base pelf rather than of divine art, and that when his interests came into conflict with those of a higher being like an artist they had no standing. On the Continent of Europe would be found, I believe, a considerable number of persons, not themselves professional musicians, who would heartily agree with this proposition.

It is by this principle that some business men justify practices which less ardent lovers of excellence might call dishonest. An

illustration is afforded by the answer sometimes given to the following question:

Some years ago Adolph Segal began the construction of a sugar refinery in the city of Philadelphia. During the process of construction, and while Mr. Segal was hard pressed for cash, he was offered a loan by one Gustav E. Kissel, a broker for an undisclosed principal. The offer was accepted, and in return for the loan a majority of the stock of the refinery company and all its bonds were deposited with Kissel. At the same time written authority was given him to exercise the voting power of the stock. The undisclosed principal was in fact the American Sugar Refining Company, and a few days after these arrangements were completed Kissel attended a meeting of the board of directors of the Pennsylvania Refining Company, causing four of the seven directors to resign and himself and three others subject to his control to be elected to fill the vacancies. The majority of the board then adopted and spread upon the minutes of the company the following declaration: "Resolved, that the Refinery do not run and that no proceedings looking to the beginning of operation be taken until further order of the board."[3] Is this fair competition?

About two per cent of the undergraduates entering the course in business ethics in the University of Wisconsin answer this question as follows: "When a man is such a fool as Segal, anyone has the right to 'do' him." About twice this number believe he was not wronged because he ought to have been looking out for a trap; which comes to about the same thing.

Some vigorous minds are willing to carry this principle through with relatively complete consistency to the bitter end. One of them once called upon Mr. Samuel Crothers, who has given us an entertaining account of the interview in an essay entitled, "As He Sees Himself," to be found in *The Pardoner's Wallet*. The visitor was a forger who decided that his business was on the whole unprofitable and had therefore determined to abandon it. He called, of course, to borrow money.

"At last I said, 'You have told me what you did before you concluded to reform. I am curious to know how, in those days, you looked at things. Was there anything which you wouldn't have done, not because you were afraid of the law, but because you felt it would be wrong?'

" 'Yes,' he said, 'there is one thing I never would do, because it always seemed low down. I never would steal.

[3] W. S. Stevens, *Unfair Competition*, page 215.

"It was evident that further discussion would be unprofitable without definition of terms. I found that by stealing he meant petty larceny, which he abhorred. In our condemnation of the sneak thief and the pickpocket we were on common ground. His feeling of reprobation was, if anything, more intense than that which I felt at the time. He alluded to the umbrellas and other portable articles he had noticed in the hallway. Anyone who would take advantage of an unsuspecting householder by purloining such things was a degenerate. He had no dealings with such moral imbeciles.

"It seemed to me that I might press the analogy which instantly occurred to me between 'stealing' and forgery.

" 'Do they not, ' I said, 'seem to you to amount to very much the same thing?'

"I had struck a wrong note. Analogies are ticklish things to handle, for things which are alike in certain respects are apt to be quite different in other respects. His mind was intent on the differences. The sneak-thief, he told me, is a vulgar fellow of no education. The forger and the check-raiser are experts. They are playing a game. Their wits are pitted against the wits of the men who are paid high salaries for detecting them. They belong to quite different spheres."

The point of view of Mr. Crother's caller is that the superior mind has superior rights as against its inferiors. "All that cowards have is mine" [*i. e.*, what I have a right to], was the motto of one of the famous English buccaneering families of the Middle Ages. Similarly our forger might have said, with a consciousness of complete rectitude, "All that blockheads have is mine."

Many of the blockheads themselves would unquestionably have agreed with him. The notion spread abroad by some writers that this point of view represents merely the "philosophy of the top dog" is the outcome of a very superficial acquaintance with human nature. There may be some differences of opinion at times, as between the top dog and the under dog, as to who is really the possessor of genuine excellence. But the conviction that the more excellent actually have superior rights is very deeply rooted in the soul of man. It is losing much of its grip upon us, no doubt. But it has by no means disappeared, despite all our professions of belief in moral equality. A servant in a London family some years ago had a very serious and prolonged attack of illness. Her mistress, instead of shipping her off to a public hospital where she would have been thrust into a pauper's ward, cared for the young woman with beautiful devotion. Immediately upon recovery the beneficiary of all this kindness "gave notice." She had never be-

fore worked for a woman who was not a lady; and her present mistress could not be a lady else she would never have taken care of a poor servant like herself.

This entire standard of judgment was once given classical expression in the words of a small boy at the Albany Truant School: "It's mean to hit a dog, but I'd hit a cat every time." We may call this point of view the principle of the primacy of the *good of the more excellent.*

### A Warning Against Some Possible Misinterpretations

The preceding description does not mean that where interests conflict the judge, in pronouncing judgment, always and necessarily balances one against another. In the first place the situation may be one concerning which he has already formed an opinion. In that event his judgment may be a mere repetition of a previous one of his own, or an echo of someone else's pronouncement, and thus involve no mental process but memory. Or it may be the result of a subsumption under some general principle, such as, "Promises are to be kept." In the second place the judge may see only one side of the situation. How easily this may happen is shown to perfection in the ordinary discussion of labor disputes. Some persons look at them solely as matters between employer and employee; others solely from the point of view of the consumer. Only a small minority seem to possess a vision broad enough to include all the issues involved. Finally there may enter into the judgment dealing with the conflicting claims of rival interests a factor as yet unnamed, the consideration of which will best be deferred till we reach Chapter VIII, page 126.

Before leaving this subject I must repeat the warning of the preceding Chapter. The principles here described are not to be thought of as formulas existing ready-made in the background of the layman's mind. They determine his judgment upon individual situations. But they are not necessarily for him conscious generalizations. A principle may govern our action, our thoughts, or our feelings without our being explicitly aware of its existence within us. When a man dodges an automobile he need not act with the proposition before his mind: It is impossible for two

material bodies to occupy the same space at the same time. And most of us use Mill's "four methods" for determining causes and effects all our lives without ever having taken the first step towards formulating them.

### Summary of Chapters II and III

Chapter II attempted to show that in all original judgments actions are pronounced right or wrong according to their relation as means to the good or harm of some or all of those thereby affected. For the eudemonic judgment actions are right in so far as they result in good or avert or remove some evil; wrong in so far as they result in positive evil or loss of attainable good. In the dysdemonic judgment the relationship is reversed, and it is the infliction of a harm or the removal of a good that is judged right.

The dysdemonic judgment is seldom or never required to pass upon the competing claims of two parties. In other words the judge is not considering whether A ought to be punished rather than B because it is impossible to punish both. The question before him is merely whether A ought to be punished at all, and if so, how severely. In the eudemonic judgment, on the other hand, the question of the distribution of good and evil is constantly forced upon us by the actual interpenetration of human interests. Moralists have often assumed that in such cases the greater good (including the most favorable attainable balance of good over evil when some of the latter is inevitable), or where evil is unavoidable, the least evil possible under the conditions, will be regarded always and by everyone as having the right of way. But, as we have seen, this is far from being true; for by many persons the good of those whose interests strike the imagination the more forcibly, or of those who are nearer to the agent or who are more excellent in personality, may be held on occasions to have the superior claim.

If these conclusions are valid Subjectivism is justified in its fundamental contention. Mutually contradictory moral judgments do exist. On the other hand the range in variations is a comparatively limited one. For at most such judgments, how-

ever divergent, can only represent different opinions as to what may be called the "location" of good and evil, that is to say, different answers to the questions, Who may be, or who ought to be harmed? Who may be, or who ought to be served? The exact significance of this statement will appear as we proceed.

## Chapter IV

# THE OBJECT OF THE MORAL JUDGMENT

According to the preceding Chapters the rightness or wrongness of an act is determined by its results. But this statement is ambiguous. Does it mean the *actual* results, the *expected* results, or the *will to produce* certain results? The answer to this question supplies the subject matter of this Chapter. By way of preparation, we shall find it advantageous to begin with an analysis of voluntary action.

This analysis is required because, as we all know, voluntary action is the only kind of action to which we attach moral praise or blame. A cyclone may do incalculable harm, a timely shower save an entire crop, but no one would apply moral epithets to either. To be sure these phenomena represent merely the working of material forces; but not all the actions of conscious beings belong under the jurisdiction of the moral judgment. An infant may break a valuable vase; a soldier may unwittingly sneeze and thereby reveal the presence of an army in a surprise attack; a man afflicted with homicidal mania may kill his child. Yet none of these actions, provided its nature was understood, would be considered wrong. Only actions believed to be voluntary, then, call forth moral approval and disapproval. Accordingly the problem of the Chapter may be stated in this form: What element of a voluntary act is at fault when we judge it to be wrong, and what element is it whose satisfactory condition leads us to call it right?

### The Nature of Voluntary Action

To answer this question we shall have to analyze voluntary action. Its essential feature is the acceptance or rejection of a certain state of things regarded by the agent as attainable. It is, so to speak, the saying to oneself, "This shall—or shall not—come into existence." This acceptance or rejection is called a volition, or "act of will." It refers always to the future. The future

may be only a second distant, or it may be some period after one's death, as in writing one's last will and testament. The state of things may be a state of the material world, as when I move a chair or light a fire in the fireplace; it may be a state of some other person's mind, as where I inform a stranger how to find the university campus; it may be a state of my own mind, as when I repeat a telephone number in order that I may be able to recall it when needed. The state of things, once more, may be something not in existence, as in lighting the fire; or it may be the continuance of something now existing which would cease to be if it were not for my active interference, as in putting more wood on the fire after it is started.

First, then, in a typical case there is the idea of a result which the agent believes can be brought about by the contraction of his muscles, and by the consequent motions of certain parts of his body. This idea is accepted or adopted by the agent in the sense that he says in effect: "Let that which the idea represents come into being." Thereupon, under normal conditions, the appropriate bodily motions take place, and these in turn produce the state of things which was the goal of the volition. Precisely what is meant by that somewhat mysterious term *acceptance* is a matter upon which the experts differ. This much, however, is certain and obvious. It can not take place apart from desire. A desire involves the idea of a "state of things" and a tendency to consent to its existence. A tendency means a force which will operate except as hindered by some opposing force. The opposing force in this case is a conflicting desire. In the simplest form of volition there is but one desire present. Frequently, however, this has to meet the opposition of another desire. For example, a man possessed of the average amount of health and vigor becomes aware that the room has grown too cool for comfort. Without hesitation he rises from his seat and puts some wood on the fire. No counterconsiderations need occur to his mind. There is no clash of rival forces because it takes two to make a quarrel. Another man who is in the same external situation has rheumatism, so that every movement brings physical suffering. With him the desire for a warmer room will come into conflict with the desire to avoid organic pain. Often, of course, several desires

fuse into one, as perhaps in my desire to play golf this afternoon. Indeed the majority of our desires, I suppose, appear in consciousness as members of a more or less complex system. When our description of volition attempts to pass beyond these simple facts it plunges into a jungle of difficulties. Fortunately, however, ethics is not compelled to formulate an opinion about them. The moralist, therefore, may pass the problems—as he does with cheerfulness—over to the psychologist.

When we use the term *act* do we mean merely the volition, or this plus the bodily motions, or these plus the effects; and if the last, how many of these effects? The answer of course is that this is precisely as the speaker may choose. However, common usage certainly accepts, in the main, the third alternative. If you object that the effects may go on forever the reply is, only those effects are counted a part of the act which were foreseen at the time of the adoption; or perhaps those in addition which would have been foreseen if the agent had used "ordinary" foresight. This has been well shown by Abraham Tucker, who writes:

"In speaking of action we usually comprehend several operations acting in a series towards completing the purpose we had in view, provided we conceive them necessarily consequent upon our volition. Thus when Roger shot the hawk hovering over his master's dove-house, he only pulled the trigger; the action of the spring drove down the flint, the action of the flint struck fire into the pan, the action of the fire set the powder in blaze, that of the powder forced out the shot, that of the shot wounded the bird, and that of gravity brought her to the ground. But all this we ascribe to Roger, for we say he brought down the felon; and if we think the shot a nice one, we applaud him for having done a clever feat. So likewise we claim the actions of other persons for our own, whenever we expect they will certainly follow as we shall direct. When Squire Peremptory distrained his tenant for rent, perhaps he did no more than write his orders in a letter; this his servant carried to the post, the postman conveyed it into the country where it was delivered to the steward, who sent his clerk to make the distress. Yet we ascribe the whole to the Squire's own doing, for we say he distrained his tenant; and call it a prudent or a cruel act, according as we think of the circumstances of the case."[1]

The rejection of a suggestion is, of course, just as truly a volition as is the acceptance. The name which this kind of a volition bears in law is forbearance. A failure to keep an ap-

[1] *The Light of Nature Pursued,* Ch. II, sec. 9.

pointment through forgetfulness is an unintentional or inadvertent omission. "But if I remember an appointment and resolve not to keep it, [the omission] is intentional and is called a forbearance." [2]

### Intention and Motive Defined

A voluntary act, as we have seen, always involves a looking forward to results. These expected results may be called the intention of the act (linguistic usage is, unfortunately, not entirely uniform). According to this terminology, therefore, the intention includes all the expected consequences of the inner process, beginning with the bodily movements. This means, it must be noted, not merely those for the sake of which the action was undertaken, but also those which were distasteful or were for any reason objected to, and also those, if foreseen, to which the agent was perfectly indifferent. Thus if I stop a lecture to open a window, my intention includes not merely freshening or cooling the air with its consequences, but also an interruption to the thinking of the class consequent upon the fact that they can not let me do anything so interesting as opening a window without following my movements with an absorbed attention which they may not have been giving to my words. It includes in addition to this consequence, which a lecturer who cared anything for his work would deplore, others to which he is ordinarily indifferent, such as the making of a certain amount of noise by raising the window. All these things are parts of the intention, if the thought of them was in the mind when action began.[3]

We commonly distinguish between the intention of an act and its motive. Unfortunately, however, few terms in the vocabulary of psychology or ethics are used with so much ambiguity or divergence of meaning, both by layman and special student. And yet the matter seems simple enough. A motive is obviously that which moves a man to act. But this is always, in voluntary

[2] Salmond, *Jurisprudence*, 7th Edition, sec. 128, p. 382.

[3] The word *intention* is here used in a purely technical sense. While the meaning here adopted can be justified, I think, by linguistic usage, we must particularly note that it is not identical with the meaning of the verb, I intend. This commonly affirms the existence of a volition which is to be realized in the future, as "I intend to study this afternoon"; whereas the intention has to do with one element in a volition, the idea of the total effects which the agent, in willing, expects to produce.

action, a wish or desire. Some desires produce action; others fail to do so either because they involve, or are thought to involve an impossibility, or because they are overcome by conflicting desires. A motive, then, is a desire which leads to action. Thus if I decide to stop the lecture and open the window, my motive is the desire to have the room more comfortable for the class and myself.

### The Object of the Moral Judgment Is Neither the Actual nor the Expected Results

The foregoing analysis will appreciably facilitate, I believe, the solution of the problem of the Chapter. This may be stated, for the moment, in the following words: Is it the actual results, the intention, or the motives of a voluntary act that call forth moral approbation and disapprobation?

The first alternative may be excluded at once. Consider, for example, the two following cases: (1) The executor of an estate loses a portion of the property entrusted to his care by investing it in the bonds of a corporation that goes into bankruptcy. The corporation was one in which he had no personal interest, and the investment was made only after a very careful investigation into its status and prospects had convinced him that it represented all that could be desired in the matter of safety. (2) The executor of an estate, having conceived a bitter hatred for his ward, invests the latter's money in securities that he believes will fall in value. Instead of that they rise and make his ward rich. An analysis of these cases shows at once that right and wrong are not determined by the actual results. No distinction is more common than that between a misfortune, a mistake, and a wrong. A misfortune is an event which is due to circumstances entirely beyond our power to control. A mistake is an action whose outcome is due to misinformation or lack of information. The first of the two incidents just described must be classed as either a misfortune or a mistake. It is only the second that is a wrong.

The morality of an action is thus not determined by its actual results. Is, then, its rightness or wrongness dependent upon the nature of the intention or of the motive? Clearly not the former; for you may have two persons acting with precisely the same intention—that is to say, foreseeing the same consequences as

flowing from their actions—but from different motives, and you may approve one man's action as right and disapprove the other as wrong. A soldier in battle, for example, goes forward to meet the enemy of his country solely because there is an officer behind him who will shoot him if he runs away. Next to him is a soldier in exactly the same external situation, but whose resolution to meet and help conquer the enemy is absolutely undetermined by the loaded revolver at his back. Both face the same conditions, and have the same intention. That is to say both have willed the same muscular contractions—those involved in rushing forward, etc., and have accepted the same set of consequences, namely, the possibility of being killed by the enemy, with the escape from the certainty of being killed by the officer; and also, of course, the consequences to the enemy army involved in their decision. But each has adopted this mode of action from different motives; one from the desire to save his own life, the other from the desire to serve his country. Is the act of the first man on the same moral level with that of the second? In reality, though outwardly identical, they are acts of a very different order, as is proved by the fact that the first can properly be called neither an act of courage nor of patriotism; while the second, not deriving its character from the presence of the officer, is as truly an act of patriotic devotion as if he were not there.

Again a man gives money to charity in order to advertise his business. Here, obviously, the act is on precisely the same moral plane as any other advertising venture (disregarding, for the sake of simplicity, the implication of hypocrisy, which of course would make it worse). His intention is to help the hospital and enrich himself. But if the only part of the intention which moves him is the idea of making money, then from the moral point of view his act has no more moral value than any other scheme for increasing his balance at the bank.

### The Object of the Moral Judgment Is the Volition

The conclusion thus seems unavoidable that it is the motives rather than either the actual or the expected results which determine the moral value of actions. But we have not yet reached the end of our journey. Suppose an executor steals his ward's

money. Here the motive, the desire to possess money, is entirely innocent. The trouble with the act lies in considerations which were before the mind at the time of the decision but which failed to move the will; considerations, namely, of good faith and the interests of the ward. In other words, we condemn it not because of the actual motives which entered into and determined the character of the volition but because of possible motives which failed to determine it.

Our judgment of the soldier who remains in the line solely because of the consequences involved in running away supplies another illustration of the same principle. His desire to save his life is commendable. But his decision to go forward, which is, of course, morally on a par with the decision to run in the absence of the officer, is entitled to be called a coward's decision because it is made in utter indifference to the call of patriotism, in consequence of a calculation that the balance of personal safety was in favor of going in one direction rather than the other.

Again, consider an incident such as the following. A man drives a car along a city street at forty miles an hour and in so doing kills a child. We regard him as guilty of a great wrong. But of course he did not desire to kill the child. Our condemnation rests upon the assumption that he was aware of the probability, or at any rate of the possibility of the accident and was too indifferent about human life to allow it to affect his conduct.

These illustrations do not represent exceptions, but rather the ordinary course of the moral judgment. Most of our disapprobations are not due to the nature of the motive. This is always, at the lowest, innocent, except where it consists in malice or ill-will in some of its varied forms. The trouble with men ordinarily is not what moves them to action, but what fails to move them. Man's nature can not fairly be accused of total depravity, as some theologians have taught. The trouble with most of us is not that we are perverse, but that we are half-baked.

The conclusion which emerges from the foregoing analysis is really a very simple one. In judging an act we look to its motives. But we take into account not merely the motives, that is, the desires that bring it into existence (see above, page 55), but

also those desires which fail to produce effects because they are too weak. And when their strength drops to zero, in other words to the point of complete indifference, as in the case of the speeder, we recognize this fact as significant also. Now desires, counting weak and strong, present and absent, determine the nature of the volition. Therefore the object of the moral judgment is the volition as a whole—the volition to produce a certain result or set of results.

The preceding discussion has introduced us to a distinction of the highest importance, that between the direction of a desire and its strength. Presumably all persons desire wealth; a few in somewhat lukewarm fashion, the great majority with an ardent and never dimmed intensity. The strength of a desire is measured by the amount of opposition from other desires which it is capable of overcoming. It is thus by no means identical with the amount of feeling which accompanies the pursuit of a desired end, or which is aroused by fruition or failure. The factor of feeling is, to a considerable extent, a matter of temperament, and is perhaps strongest in the sentimentalist, who will do nothing at the cost of effort. Repetition, or habit, strengthens desire, but lowers the amount of feeling. And every man with any moral backbone whatever has carried through a purpose representing some desire or system of desires, against the protests of very strong feelings, such as intense bodily pain, fatigue, etc., when the desire which urged him forward was almost as bare of actual consciously experienced feeling as is the thought of most of us at this moment of the properties of a triangle. Men who have engaged in any endurance test, like certain athletic contests, will know at once what I mean.

Our study of the object of the moral judgment shows that we judge a volition not merely according to the direction of the desires which make it what it is, but also by their strength. And we appraise it not merely according to the strength or weakness of the defeated desires, but also according to that of the victorious ones. It is clear that we can not do otherwise. Strength means more of a given thing; and more of a good thing is better than less, while more of a bad thing is worse than less. An act of charity, for instance, clearly derives its character not merely from

the goal which it sets before itself but also from the amount of the spirit of charity which it exhibits. For example, we think better of a man who is willing to make a great effort to serve a friend than of one who is willing to do a little, but not much; we think better, again, of a man who subscribes a hundred dollars to the community chest than of one who, with equal income and equal demands upon his purse, subscribes only ten.[4]

This means, among other things, that when we say it is the volition to which we attach the adjectives right and wrong, we mean by volition something very different from a "New Year's resolution." Such resolutions may make a man feel good, but will never make him good. They are the specialty of the sentimentalist, who always feels but never acts; and from the moral point of view he is in some respects the most hopeless specimen of the human race. The only volition that counts is that which is so completely a part of the self that it will pass over into action unless circumstances outside of the control of the agent render this impossible. "Right action," says Professor Mackenzie, "involves a determined effort to produce a good result." A volition is morally worthless unless it will lead to a determined effort in the face of either inner or outer opposition or difficulties.

### A Volition Is Right or Wrong According to the Attitude Exhibited in It Towards Good and Evil

The statement that the moral judgment looks to the desires is, as it stands, too broad. What counts in the forming of moral judgments is not the presence or absence of any and every desire, but only of certain desires. Consider, for example, the actions that made up the life of George Washington. Apparently none of them exhibited the existence of any desire for fame; none or few of them, any desire for knowledge lying outside of the fields in which, in one capacity or another, he was called upon to act. The absence of these motive forces had nothing to do with the

[4] The distinction between the direction and the strength of a volition is well illustrated by the Chinese moralist Mencius: "As in the case of shooting at a mark a hundred paces distant: that you reach it is owing to your strength; that you hit the mark is not owing to your strength [but to the direction in which you aim the arrow]." *Works*, Book V; Part II, Ch. I, sec. 7. (Legge's translation of the *Chinese Classics*, Vol. II.)

moral quality of Washington's volitions. It is true that the paucity of his intellectual interests would make him appeal to many educated men as a less congenial personality. Consequently when they take to writing on ethics they may be tempted to treat such indifference as a flaw of character. But no one who is capable of distinguishing between the attractions of a man because of identity of tastes and the attractions of a man because he is good will make any such mistake. As a matter of fact, if the conclusions of the present Chapter and of Chapter II are sound, right and wrong depend upon just one condition, namely, the determination of the volition by either of two desires. These are the desire for good and the desire for evil. The eudemonic judgment approves the desire for the good of conscious beings (together with the aversion from their harm) and disapproves its absence and its opposite. The dysdemonic judgment approves the desire for the harm of certain persons, and disapproves its absence and its opposite.

### Character as the Object of the Moral Judgment

It is often said that in the last resort it is character which is the object of the moral judgment. This statement represents really the fundamental truth of the matter. By character is here meant the source of the individual volitions. To venture beyond this statement would be to go into metaphysics which this book will avoid as far as possible. It will be sufficient to say that character bears the same relation to the individual volition that memory does to a given act of recollection—whatever this relationship may be. Now we know the memory only through acts of recollection, and we know the character only through the individual volitions. Hence the latter must be the first object judged. Furthermore it is the volition that directly produces the desirable results. But, of course, we are more concerned for the permanent than for the temporary, and hence we constantly look behind the passing individual volition to the character which we think of as back of it. "Am I losing my memory?" anxiously inquires a man when he has failed to recall something which he thought was entirely at his command. The individual lapse may in itself be a matter of no importance. But as the sign of a failing

memory it may be portentous. It is thus with character also. The judgment upon the single volition and that upon the source of volitions have the same roots and the same nature. Is character or the individual volition the object of the moral judgment? The answer is, both. But from the nature of the case a flaw in the character is a far more serious matter than a casual fault in a single volition.

The position that character is the ultimate object of the moral judgment is confirmed by the rapid increase in the amount of our condemnation for an offense in the event of repetition. A second act of theft is regarded as a far graver matter than the first one; the reason being that it points to a permanent trend in the character. It is also confirmed by the distinction which we make between a premeditated wrong and one committed on the spur of the moment. The same conclusion follows from our attitude towards omissions. The omission of an act, as we saw on page 54, above, may be due to a volition not to perform it. In this case, of course, the volition in question is subject to the same approbation or condemnation as any other. But an unintentional or inadvertent omission, due, for example, to forgetfulness, may under certain circumstances be regarded as a moral fault. A boy persistently brings mud into the house on his shoes, though his weary mother has to do all the cleaning. "I never think," is the excuse he offers. But why doesn't he think? The answer is, nine times out of ten, that he does not greatly care. There are a number of conditions which determine the effective functioning of memory. But perhaps the most powerful single one is the amount of attention given to that which is to be remembered—in this case the request of the mother; and attention, in its turn, is dependent upon interest. Accordingly: No interest, no "thinking." Thus we see it is only half true that "Purpose is but the slave to memory." Memory is, on the contrary, in all matters connected with action, to a large extent the slave of purpose. So is imagination, in the sense of the power to work out new forms of service not suggested by past experience or observation or reading. One of America's most successful business men tells how on his first day at work he was loaded down with a long list of commissions. "What shall I do if I forget one?" he asked.

"You mustn't forget," was the answer. "I do not intend to forget, but suppose I should?" "You mustn't forget," was the answer repeated with some additional vigor. After this dialogue had been recited several times, with continually increasing warmth on the part of the employer, the boy left the store to carry out his orders. He did not forget any of them. Our responsibility for thinking when thinking is necessary applies not merely to thoughts of action, as wiping one's shoes on the mat, but also to thoughts of possible consequences, as dangers. The failure to think of these is called heedlessness. However, while all this is true, we must be careful about applying it to our judgments upon others without discrimination, for perhaps one time out of ten the memory may slip a cog from causes with which interest or want of interest has nothing to do.

### Summary

Voluntary action is the only form of action that calls forth the moral judgment. Everyone knows this, but, as students of ethics, we wish to have more definite information, and to find out precisely what part of a voluntary action it is that produces this response. A voluntary act consists of three parts: a volition, the consequent muscular contractions, and the results of these contractions in the world of matter or of conscious life. In volition as in desire there must be an end in view. But it ordinarily happens that we can not realize the desired end without producing certain results to which we are indifferent, and others which we desire should *not* be. The sum total of these foreseen results of the volition are called its intention. A motive may be defined as that part of an intention for the sake of which the volition takes place. This is the same as saying that the motive is the desire which leads to action, since a desire is the idea of a state of things to which the self consents, or would consent if it were not for opposing desires.

Neither results, nor the intention as such is the object of the moral judgment. This is rather the motive. But the volition takes its character not merely from the desire that was strong enough to produce action, but also from those desires which were too weak to hinder the action, including those ideas of possible re-

sults which were in the agent's mind at the time but to which he was completely indifferent.

Absence of desire or absence of a sufficiently strong desire to prevent the action from taking place indicates the quality of a volition, just as the absence of a railroad characterizes a town, or the absence of ordinary intelligence is the distinguishing mark of that person of very positive qualities, the fool. There are criminals who commit murder and robbery without a single qualm. This absence of aversion from the shedding of blood is as distinctive a trait of the volition to kill as is the love of money which ordinarily forms its motive. In volition, then, we look indeed to the intention, but we do so in order to discover the relation of the agent's desires to it: What did he want, to what did he feel an aversion, to what was he indifferent?

Furthermore, we ask not merely what he wanted, but also how much he wanted it. A volition is characterized by the strength of the various elements which compose it, as well as by their direction. Finally, the moral judgment does not concern itself with the presence or absence of any and every desire, but only with certain ones, namely, the desire for good and the desire for harm. Approbation and disapprobation turn on the attitude taken by the agent towards the good or harm which results from his action.

We do not contradict the preceding analysis if we say that character is the object of the moral judgment, because character is definable (as you may wish) either as the sum of a man's volitions, or his dominant volitions, or the source of his volitions.

There are certain apparent difficulties involved in these conclusions. Chapter IX will show that they are due to ambiguities in the meaning of the word *right*.

## Chapter V

# EGOISM, ALTRUISM, AND THE DESIRE TO HARM

The object of moral approbation and disapprobation, as we have learned in the last Chapter, is the presence or absence of certain attitudes towards welfare. These attitudes consist in the desire to serve and the desire to harm, respectively. Furthermore the source of moral approbation and disapprobation, as I shall try to show in succeeding Chapters, is to be found precisely in these same desires. The desire to serve takes the form of egoism or altruism, according as self or another is the object of the desire. The desire to harm I shall not attempt to name at present. Egoism, altruism, and the desire to harm form the subject matter of the present Chapter. We shall now seek to determine their nature and the principal laws in accordance with which they operate. It will be most convenient to begin with the study of egoism.

## I

### Definitions of Egoism and Altruism

Egoistic action can not be defined, as it sometimes has been, as the fulfilling of one's own desires, for every voluntary action is and can be nothing other than this. Whether I desire to go to the theater this evening or to send a friend who has little money and little opportunity for enjoyment, whether I desire education for myself, or, in another period of life, for my children, whether I desire to save myself or a child in the street from being run over by an automobile, whether I desire revenge, or the possession of power, or the glory or welfare of my country, the desire, in the very nature of the case, must be *mine*. Whose else could it be? The characteristic feature of egoistic action, as distinguished from altruistic, must be found, not in its source, but in its object. Again egoistic action can not be defined, as it also has been, as action which has self for its imme-

diate object. It is a well-established fact of criminal psychology that the repentant sinner, in indignation against himself, sometimes deliberately seeks suffering and even death for himself, or refuses to attempt to avoid it when it is brought upon him by others.[1] Egoism, as the word is commonly used, involves some kind of concern for one's own interests, and therefore can never include the wish to injure self solely for the sake of injury. To call such a phenomenon egoism would be as much a blurring of distinctions as to call the desire to humiliate or destroy your enemy altruism.

A third definition is open to us, and this, I believe, supplies us with an answer to our question. According to this an egoistic action is one which I perform with a view to the attainment of some good for myself.

Precisely what is meant by the term *good* must be left for discussion till a later Chapter. Everyone knows what it means till someone asks him; that is to say, he knows its meaning in the same sense in which he knows the meaning of the word *right, cause,* and *probability;* in other words, he knows just enough of it for ordinary practical purposes. *Good* is a synonym for welfare; and with this enough will have been said to meet our present need.

The good which is the object of my desire may be a good in the concrete, some definite state of myself which I believe I shall find worth while when it comes, as a visit this evening with my old friend Smith. On the other hand, it may be a bare abstract idea of a good as such. An illustration of this latter is the perennial, inextinguishable, and well-nigh universal desire for a larger income. This desire may be, perhaps in most persons is, a desire for the opportunity to obtain a number of concrete goods which the individual can enumerate, the enjoyment of which he can picture more or less completely in the imagination. But in many, probably most persons, it is more. The money is desired also because it is something which can be used to satisfy any desires (of certain kinds) as they arise, whatever they may turn out to be. We can see the significance of this most clearly through its absence. Many six-year-old boys will absolutely

[1] *Cf.* above Chapter II, page 31.

refuse to work for money except as there is some definite end before their mind which can be attained only through cash in hand. By the time they are ten, however, most of them can be induced to sell small portions of their freedom even when they have no idea of what they are going to do with the money, or when they intend to save it against some unknown date for the realization of some undetermined purpose.

The desire for my good, as has been pointed out elsewhere (Chapter IV, page 52), is always the desire for my future good. When a man is raising a glass of water to his lips he is acting with the purpose of bringing into existence a state of himself not yet existing. But the act of preserving the *status quo,* as where he replenishes the fire in order to maintain the present temperature of the room, is also an act which looks to the future. Egoism, therefore, must be defined as the desire for a future state of myself which I believe to be good.

In defining egoism we have at the same time been paving the way for a definition of altruism. Like egoism it is the desire for good, in this case the good of some person, or persons, or group besides self. Like egoism it must, from the very nature of voluntary action, refer to the future, even though it be a future removed from the present by the tick of a watch. Altruism, then, is the desire for a future state of another or others which I believe will be a good state for them to be in. It should go without saying that a desire is altruistic only in so far as the good of the other is desired as an end in itself, not as a means to some good for myself.

From our definitions of egoism and altruism there follows a very important conclusion: Egoism and altruism are not separate and independent desires like curiosity and approbativeness; they are simply two different directions of the same force. The fundamental principle, of which each is a manifestation, may be formulated as follows: The thought of a good as such tends to arouse a desire for its realization or attainment. Since it is convenient to have a name for this spring of action I suggest that in psychological and ethical discussion we employ for this purpose the term *benevolence,* using it, of course, not in its common but in its etymological significance as the willing well to anyone.

The alternative is an invention compounded out of Greek or Latin roots, which it is desirable to avoid as far as possible. Any case, then, of desire for good, whether it be the good of self, or of another, or others, whether as individuals or a group, is, in the nomenclature of this book, a case of benevolence.

### The Existence of Altruism

As the existence of altruism has always been denied by some, we must now inquire whether there is really anything in human nature corresponding to the name. Certainly the burden of proof rests upon him who denies. For however great may be the total volume of egoistic actions, anyone who does not live in a Hell on earth has assuredly had the opportunity to see any number of actions in which altruistic desire was, to all appearance, at least a factor, even a leading factor, and far from infrequently the sole, or the sole decisive factor. Examples range from the parental or the fraternal devotion which denies itself luxuries and sometimes what are considered necessities, in order that a son or daughter, a brother or sister, may be given an education, to the man who, face to face with death, elects to die that others may live.[2] And it shows itself, of course, not merely in positive service but also in numberless forbearances,—in the refusal to injure another for the sake of personal gain.

"There is always a supply of courage when needed," says a magazine article, apropos of the heroic death of a fireman. Our Civil War was fought largely by volunteers on both sides; while the English, the Canadian, and the Australian armies in the World War were either entirely or in large part composed of men who offered their lives to save the life of their country. The motives of those who made the great surrender were undoubtedly of more than one kind; the commonplace and the ignoble alike appearing, and sometimes mingling with the highest considerations in the same person. But what I wish to emphasize here is the fact that the altruistic motives are present also, equally with the love of adventure and the fear of public opinion.[3]

[2] See Gustav Kobbe, "Every Day Heroism," *Century Magazine,* Vol. 55, p. 400.

[3] See T. H. Procter, "The Motives of the Soldier," *International Journal of Ethics,* Vol. 31, October, 1920, p. 26.

But "peace hath her victories"—and her heroes—"no less renowned than war." Shortly after the close of the Spanish-American War the American commission appointed to investigate the cause of yellow fever called for volunteers among the enlisted men of the American army of occupation in Cuba to enable them to test their theories of the relation of yellow fever to the bite of the infected mosquito. There were more volunteers offering themselves for the service than were needed. All faced the certainty that some would undergo a serious and painful illness, with the possibility of death at the end. In addition, those who volunteered to test the view that the germs of yellow fever were carried by clothing, slept for three weeks in a closed cabin, in stifling heat, using bedclothes and night clothes which had covered those who had died of yellow fever and which were foul and filthy with its excreta to an unimaginable degree.[4]

The germ of the capacity for such devotion is not even the property of a select few—the moral *élite*—but is spread broadcast, even though it may not be absolutely universal, in the race. For no one whole-heartedly admires a man for heroism unless he feels within himself at least some stirrings of the impulse to do likewise; unless, in other words, he wishes he had the will which would enable him to act in like manner under the same conditions. Otherwise he despises the man as a fool. Thus most persons on the whole feel contempt rather than admiration for Saint Simeon Stylites, who stood on the top of a pillar in the desert for the last half of his life as the most ingenious and effective method he could contrive for making himself thoroughly miserable. In the darkest days of our Civil War, Jay Gould, "Jim" Fiske, Daniel Drew, and a number of other financial cutthroats went to President Lincoln with a "proposition" which would net him "millions." He was to be let into one of their little deals, on condition, of course, of a suitable return of favors on his part. When he refused to have anything to do with their scheme, they felt no admiration for his patriotism. On the contrary they thought and said that he was "crazy" for being wrapped up in "saving the Union," when he might be making his fortune. He was simply a being beyond their powers of comprehension. If,

[4] H. A. Kelly, *Walter Reed and Yellow Fever*, Ch. VI.

then, you feel the attraction of the finer manifestations of character, even though you are too weak to imitate them in your own life, this means that there is something in the end for which the sacrifice was made that appeals to you. It points to the existence in you of a corresponding desire, however impotent it might prove to be in the face of serious temptation.

These potentialities for sacrifice show themselves as living forces in certain situations, even in men in whom they commonly fail to reveal their existence in the ordinary routine of everyday life. After the sinking of the *Titanic,* Mr. George Kennan, the celebrated traveler and authority on Russian affairs, wrote a letter to the *Outlook,* a part of which reads as follows:

"The courage and unselfishness shown by an overwhelming majority of the passengers on the ill-fated steamship *Titanic* have recalled to my mind the remarkable exhibition of the same heroic and generous characteristics by the citizens of San Francisco during the great earthquake and fire of 1906. I did not myself reach the city until some weeks after the disaster, but the remembrance of the events of that period of strain and suffering was still fresh in the mind of every observer or participant, and I was greatly impressed by the enthusiasm and deep feeling shown by everybody in speaking of the behavior of the population. One friend of mine in Oakland—a man not at all inclined to be 'gushing' or effusive in speech—said to me: 'I am glad that I lived to see the things that happened in the first ten days after that great catastrophe. Those days were the best and most inspiriting part of my life. Religious people talk about the "kingdom of heaven," but few of them expect to live long enough to see it realized on earth. I saw something that very nearly approached it in San Francisco, Berkeley, and Oakland in the week that followed the fire. Cowardice, selfishness, greed, and all the baser emotions and impulses of human character practically disappeared in the tremendous strain of that experience, and courage, fortitude, sympathy, generosity, and unbounded self-sacrifice took their places. Men became, and for a short time continued to be, all that we may suppose their Creator intended them to be, and it was a splendid and inspiriting thing to witness. We imagine that we live in a selfish and materialistic age, and perhaps we do; but I know now of what human nature—humanity as a whole—is capable, and I can never again take a pessimistic view of the world's future.' "[1]

The revolutionary changes produced in the spirit of the people of San Francisco by the great earthquake and fire are not difficult to explain. The clue is offered by a sentence of Shakespeare's: "Spirits are not finely touched but to fine issues." The

[1] *Outlook,* Vol. 101, 1912, p. 84.

average man is most effectually moved to great effort or great sacrifice for the benefit of others who are strangers to him by some evil, actual or impending, that makes a direct and impressive appeal to his imagination. One of these evils is death. Accordingly it is seldom that a workman flinches where it is a question of his escape from a mine or a flooded caisson when by standing at his post he can save the lives of his fellow-workmen. Another is an immense, appalling, and immeasurable misfortune, like the disaster which overwhelmed the city of the Golden Gate. Still another is war, where the existence of our country is at stake. Mr. James F. Muirhead, writing from and of England after six months of war, in a letter to the New York *Nation* said: "Some natures appear to require an enormously strong stimulus to evoke the full dynamic force of their potential energy. It seems as if this great struggle had the power of converting cynical and self-indulgent young men who might otherwise have come to little good into centers and leaders of responsibility."

Students of criminal psychology have coined the term *moral imbecile* to designate one who is totally devoid of moral sensibility, who feels no repugnance at the suggestion of crime before the deed and no remorse after its commission. The depths to which human nature can sink are not always realized by the smug members of a respectable community. Here, for example, is a young man who killed his father in order to rob him, and not finding the money, thrust his mother's feet into the fire to force her to tell that of which she was ignorant.[6] What were the feelings of this particular monster after his crime we are not informed; but we do know a great deal about the reactions toward wrong of the class of beings to which he belonged. One of the greatest students of criminals that ever lived was the Russian novelist Dostoevsky. This supreme analyst of the human heart, after spending three years in a Siberian prison, has the following to say about his fellow-prisoners, most of whom were murderers.

"In the course of several years I never saw one sign of repentance among these people, not a trace of despondent brooding over their crime. . . On the other hand, who can say that he has sounded the depths of these lost hearts, and has read in them what is hidden from

[6] Havelock Ellis, *The Criminal*, 4th Edition, Ch. IV, p. 147.

all the world? Yet surely it would have been possible during all these years to have noticed, to have detected something, to have caught some glimpse which would have borne witness to some inner anguish and suffering in those hearts. But it was not there, it certainly was not there. . . I have heard stories of the most terrible, the most unnatural actions, of the most monstrous murders told with the most spontaneous, childishly merry laughter."[7]

Yet it is a fair question whether a being in the semblance of a man has ever lived who *completely* met the terms of the above definition. He may never repent his own particular crimes; he may not care enough about the matter even to attempt to justify them. But always, or in any event almost always, there is something he will not do; and what is more, there is something he *will* do.

"A man by the name of Schunicht murdered one of his former mistresses in the most brutal manner and with an indifference absolutely revolting. He had already left the apartment when it occurred to him that the body might remain undiscovered for weeks, and in that event the canary belonging to the murdered woman would starve to death. Thereupon Schunicht retraced his steps, scattered enough food upon the floor of the cage to last the bird for several days, and opened the cage door and the window in the adjoining room so that in any event the bird could make its escape."[8]

In returning to the apartment where lay the dead body of the murdered woman, this brutal criminal risked his life in order to save from starvation a canary. Dostoevsky in his somber, magnificent book writes:

"In the midst of these utterly uneducated and down-trodden sufferers, I have come across instances of the greatest spiritual refinement. Sometimes one would know a man in prison for years and despise him and

[7] *The House of the Dead,* Ch. I, p. 13; *cf.,* pp. 54, 177. The conception of moral imbecility we owe to Despine, *Psychologie Naturelle,* 1868, 3 vols. The first volume, dealing with psychology in general, may be omitted with advantage. His remarkable study of cases coming before the Paris police courts begins with Vol. II. A brief but excellent survey of this subject is supplied by Havelock Ellis, *The Criminal,* Ch. IV, sec. 1. The reader should be warned that the anatomical theories presented in Ch. III have now been abandoned by most students of the subject.

[8] Lombroso, *L'Uomo Delinquente*; quoted from the German translation entitled *Der Verbrecher,* Vol. I, p. 318.

think he was not a human being but a brute. And suddenly a moment will come by chance when his soul suddenly reveals itself in an involuntary outburst, and you see in it such wealth, such feeling, such heart, such a vivid understanding of its own suffering and of the suffering of others that your eyes are opened and for the moment you can not believe what you have seen and heard yourself."[9]

Men unquestionably differ enormously in their moral make-up. But in all but a very small number, most of whom are certainly, and all of whom may possibly be subnormal intellectually, the capacity for sacrifice appears to exist, whether in its latent or its active form.

### The Denials of the Existence of Altruism: (1) The Argument from the Effects of Praise and Blame

All of these things are open to the light of day. But many of them, especially if each is taken singly and considered by itself, can perhaps be explained away as the result of the hunger for praise or the fear of blame, and thus as done, after all, from a selfish motive. The whole mass of it, in its totality, however, can not be so explained. For praise and blame could never come into existence in a world consisting solely of pure egoists. To be sure, since there is probably no such thing as a completely selfish man we can not tell precisely what this kind of a being would do. But those who represent the closest approach to this state do not blame others who, in the pursuit of their personal interests, injure them; any more than they admire those who sacrifice themselves for their benefit. The latter statement was illustrated above, on page 69. The truth of the former appears from the following account by Dostoevsky of the attitude of his Siberian fellow-prisoners toward informers. These despicable creatures tattled to the prison authorities about petty breaches of regulations on the part of their fellow-prisoners, for which service they received some trifling reward. Their victims were punished with the whip, recovery from the effects of which usually meant a week of agony in the hospital.

[9] *Op. cit.*, p. 240.

"Generally speaking informers are well treated and even liked in a convict prison. Nobody thinks any the worse of them for reporting to the governor what is going on in the prison. And if you try to explain to a convict why an informer ought to be shunned as a dangerous and dishonorable person he would not understand you." [10]

The explanation of this apparent paradox is not far to seek. It is given in the following account of the discovery of a "salted mine" in a Nevada mining camp.

"Once more the multitude had been duped and fleeced. Once more the few emerged gorged with iniquitous gains. But though curses loud and deep were showered upon the heads of the successful swindlers, they lost no caste by what they had done. How could they indeed, when every man felt in his heart that he would have played the same game [*i. e.* would have played it without self-reproach] had he held the same cards?" [11]

You may be angry at a man who cheats you, as you may at an opponent in a boxing match who punches you on the nose; but if you are a thoroughgoing egoist, like most of Dostoevsky's fellow-prisoners and, apparently, the Nevada miners, he will not sink in your estimation, any more than you would sink in your own estimation if you yourself were doing the cheating.

In a society, therefore, consisting exclusively of complete egoists praise and blame would not exist. If they did, who would sacrifice pleasure or undergo pain in order to obtain them? Would not everyone know from self-observation that they were simply a device employed to squeeze out of him, for the benefit of another, actions which otherwise he would have no sufficient motive for performing? You can pass a counterfeit coin where there are only a few such coins in circulation. But how can you conceive of a coinage consisting of nothing but counterfeits?

### The Denial of the Existence of Altruism: (2) The Argument from the Nature of Desire

If one attack fails perhaps another may have better luck. The man we call altruistic commonly derives a certain satisfaction from helping others, and feels uneasy and dissatisfied when he injures them or leaves them in the lurch; what more obvious than

[10] *Op. cit.*, Part I, Chapter III.

[11] G. F. Parsons, in the *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 60, p. 159.

the suggestion that it is the attainment of this satisfaction or the avoidance of this dissatisfaction which supplies the motive of his action?

Abraham Lincoln (in reality one of the most altruistic of men) once expressed this theory of the will in the course of a famous incident, one version of which reads as follows:

"Mr. Lincoln once remarked to a fellow-passenger on an old-time mud-coach that all men were prompted by selfishness in doing good. His fellow-passenger was antagonizing this position when they were passing over a corduroy bridge that spanned a slough. As they crossed this bridge they espied an old razor-backed sow on the bank making a terrible noise because her pigs had got into the slough and were in danger of drowning. As the old coach began to climb the hill, Mr. Lincoln called out, 'Driver, can't you stop just a moment?' Then Mr. Lincoln jumped out, ran back, and lifted the little pigs out of the mud and water and placed them on the bank. When he returned, his companion remarked: 'Now, Abe, where does selfishness come in on this little episode?' 'Why, bless your soul, Ed, that was the very essence of selfishness. I should have had no peace of mind all day had I gone on and left that suffering old sow worrying over those pigs. I did it to get peace of mind, don't you see?' "[12]

The fallacy of this explanation, however, is very easy to expose. The attainment of every desire, of whatever sort, tends to arouse a feeling of satisfaction. There is, for example, the desire to know certain facts, whether these refer to the size of the great star Betelgeuze in the constellation of Orion, or the status of the young man who calls so assiduously on the girl next door. When the knowledge comes, satisfaction is normally felt. But the rise into consciousness of this satisfaction is due to the existence of the desire; and the object of the desire, therefore, was not the satisfaction, but the satisfaction was rather the consequence of the preëxisting desire. This statement of course holds equally for dissatisfaction, from its weakest form as a vague feeling of uneasiness to its most massive and intense manifestations as sorrow or grief. Each is the sign of an aversion from a state of things which now is, or which is expected to come into existence. If there had been no such aversion there would have been no feeling.[13]

[12] Quoted from the Springfield (Ill.) *Monitor* in the *Outlook*, Vol. 56, p. 1059.

[13] *Cf.* James, *Principles of Psychology*, Vol. II, pp. 555-558.

All this applies to altruism. As with all other desires, attainment brings, or tends to bring satisfaction or joy; failure normally brings dissatisfaction, and in extreme cases sorrow. But the satisfaction could never have been obtained, dissatisfaction would never have come, if the desire for the realization of the other person's welfare had not been there in the first place. Therefore when a man's peace of mind is interfered with by the sufferings of another he must have at least some amount, whether great or small, of direct desire for their good and aversion from their harm.

It is possible for people possessed of only a small measure of altruism so to manipulate their altruistic desires as to use them as a means for the promotion of personal pleasure. They may carefully avoid scenes likely to call for any large amount of sacrifice; and when fairly caught, so that escape is out of the question, they may meet the situation by turning the attention in another direction; like the man who always rode in the street car with his eyes closed, because he could not bear to see ladies standing when he had a seat. But this is no more than we can do with our egoistic desires. The man who is without deep, long-sighted egoism, who is possessed of no capacity to adopt as an end of action a good for himself somewhat remote in time, may handle his desires for personal good with strict reference to the interests of that immediate future which we commonly call the present. A spendthrift, for example, may be driven by his fears into giving a moment's attention to his ebbing assets. But when the thought of the impending crash becomes quite unendurable he may drive it from his mind by rushing into a new debauch. The fact that we may use our altruistic endowment for the sake of our own "present" pleasure no more proves its non-existence than the fact that we may do precisely the same thing with our desire for the welfare of our next year's self proves that no such thing exists as regard for our more remote personal future.

### The Denial of the Existence of Altruism: (3) The Argument from Natural Selection

The notion that a desire can be aroused by the prospect of its own satisfaction supplied for generations a stumbling-block in

the way of the recognition of the existence of altruism. Another made its appearance upon the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859. According to the theory there presented man is a descendant of the lower animals and has reached his present position in the world of nature through the survival of the fittest in the struggle for existence. The meaning of these terms is stated by Professor Romanes as follows:

"It is a matter of observable fact that all plants and animals are perpetually engaged in what Darwin calls a 'struggle for existence.' That is to say, in every generation of every species a great many more individuals are born than can possibly survive; so that there is in consequence a perpetual battle for life going on among all the constituent individuals of any given generation. Now, in this struggle for existence, which individuals will be victorious and live? Assuredly those which are best fitted to live, in whatever respect, or respects, their superiority or fitness may consist. Hence it follows that Nature, so to speak, *selects* the best individuals out of each generation to live. And not only so; but as these favored individuals transmit their favorable qualities to their offspring according to the fixed laws of heredity, it further follows that the individuals composing each successive generation have a general tendency to be better suited to their surroundings than were their forefathers. And this follows, not merely because in every generation it is only the 'flower of the flock' that is allowed to breed, but also because if in any generation some new and beneficial qualities happen to arise as slight variations from the ancestral type they will (other things permitting) be seized upon by natural selection, and, being transmitted by heredity to subsequent generations, will be added to the previously existing type. Thus the best idea of the whole process will be gained by comparing it with the closely analogous process whereby gardeners, fanciers, and cattle-breeders create their wonderful productions; for just as these men, by always *'selecting'* their best individuals to breed from, slowly but continuously improve their stock, so Nature, by a similar process of 'selection,' slowly but continuously makes the various species of plants and animals better and better suited to the conditions of their life." [14]

From this theory it has been inferred by some that the struggle for existence in the animal world consists in the war of each against all; that this must hold for man as well as for every other animal; and that accordingly there can be no place for any other element than ruthless egoism in a creature so born, so nurtured, and so environed.

As a matter of fact, however, as Darwin himself takes great

[14] *Darwin and After Darwin*, Vol. I, p. 259. See the entire chapter (VII).

pains to show, the struggle for existence includes as one of its vital factors the struggle for the existence of other members of the same group. This holds generally among animals with the exception of the lowest; parental care extending down the scale of animal life as far as the molluscs, though it is not universal until the higher forms are reached. Among birds and mammals we find, in addition to the care of offspring, active assistance of other members of the same flock or herd. It is true that much of this care is mere blind instinct, and thus has no more moral value than sneezing. But it is prophetic of what we may expect to find in man, since, in the main, the fundamental instincts of animals are replaced in the human world by corresponding modes of voluntary action. This is emphatically the case with the struggle for the life and well-being of others. Huxley writes: "For his successful progress as far as the savage state man has been largely indebted to those qualities which he shares with the ape and the tiger." Omit "as far as the savage state," and for "largely," read "exclusively" and we have the position of those who think universal war the fundamental characteristic of the evolutionary process.

Such a view, however, is false. It overlooks the fact that parental care, with the sacrifices it involves, is an indispensable factor in the preservation of the life of the human race. It overlooks the fact also that in the wars between tribe and tribe which are a common, though not a universal feature of primitive society, wars in which the vanquished peoples are not infrequently totally destroyed, the tribe that conquers is apt to be the one that is most firmly bound together by loyalty to the chief, tribal patriotism, courage, and the spirit of self-sacrifice, and the one least cut into pieces by feuds due to murder and theft as between fellow-tribesmen. It fails to see that in the hard conditions of natural environment in which many primitive people have lived in the past, including the ancestors of the modern European nations, and in which many still live today, an environment in which life is constantly being threatened by wild beasts, by famine, and by other enemies, only those peoples who are willing to help each other when in danger or need could ever maintain their existence through a long series of centuries. Finally, it mis-

reads completely the character of the social relationships which actually obtain among very many, probably most primitive peoples. For in strict conformity with the preceding facts those writers who really know primitive man at first hand, unite in testifying that, in the main, relationships between members of the same tribe represent on the whole as high a stage of conduct as that which obtains on the average among ourselves; sometimes, indeed, a distinctly higher stage. This latter statement holds, among others, for most of the American Indians who once occupied the forests and prairies of the United States. Take, for instance, the following authoritative account of the character of the Iroquois by Lewis Morgan.

"If [the Iroquois] has never contributed a page to science nor a discovery to art . . . still there are certain qualities of his mind which shine forth in all the lustre of natural perfection. His simple integrity, his generosity, his unbounded hospitality, his love of truth, and above all, his unshaken fidelity—a sentiment inborn and standing out so conspicuously in his character that it has not untruthfully become [recognized as its characteristic feature]: all these are adornments of humanity which no art of education can instil nor refinement of civilization can bestow."

Hospitality, he further informs us, was exercised on such a scale among them that "hunger and destitution were unknown. . . Crime and offences were so infrequent that the Iroquois can scarcely be said to have had a criminal code." [15]

## Voluntary Actions Can Not Be Divided Exhaustively Into Egoistic and Altruistic

It must not be supposed that all the actions of human beings can be divided into two separate classes which may be labeled, respectively, egoistic and altruistic. In the first place, there is a great body of involuntary actions. Egoistic and altruistic actions are performed with an end in view. The essence of an involuntary action on the other hand is that it is not performed with a view of bringing into existence a "state of things" of any kind

[15] *League of the Iroquois,* Edition of 1904, Vol. I, pp. 133, 319, 321. *Cf.* Catlin, *The North American Indians,* 10th Edition, 1866, Vol. I, p. 122; Vol. II, pp. 241-252.

whatever. But it can not even be affirmed that all voluntary actions are either egoistic or altruistic. Actions motivated by the desire for harm are neither. The same is true of what may be called "unreflective desires." These, as will be shown later, are actions which are determined by the idea of a certain state of things, but in which we have not asked ourselves whether the attainment of this end will be a good at the time, or help to bring into existence a more remote good, whether for self or others; or, in which, if this question is asked, and a negative answer is given, we go ahead and act just the same merely because we feel impelled to do so. On the other hand, many voluntary actions, such as the support of one's family, the performance of the duties of citizenship, and countless others, are both altruistic and egoistic. Nor can we, even if we should wish to do so, determine just what proportion of egoism and altruism they contain.

## II

### The Stimulants of Altruism

We turn from our discussion of the nature and existence of altruism to an examination of the conditions which determine the strength of its manifestations. A correct view of the facts will prove to be of very great importance in the work which lies before us.

Our desire to serve and our aversion from harming others are profoundly affected by our capacity to realize what the service or harm means to the recipient. The mental power which brings home to us these alien experiences and enables us to appreciate their significance may be called the imagination. It is intimately associated but is not identical with the ability to visualize, that is, to call up in vivid and relatively complete form before the "mind's eye" the scenes and incidents that have previously impressed themselves upon the outer eye.

The power to realize is very unevenly distributed among human beings; but in everyone its effectiveness is greatly increased by certain external conditions. Thus we can realize best the feelings of those whose face we see and whose words we hear. "If we all

ate at the same table," writes Robert Louis Stevenson, "no one would be allowed to go hungry." A municipal judge in Detroit has the habit of taking a group of convicted offenders against the speed regulations to the receiving hospital and the morgue to which are sent the victims of the speed craze. Such a visit would, for many men, be a far more effective deterrent than a jail sentence. Again, detailed and life-like descriptions of human actions and feelings have a strong tendency to awaken or strengthen altruism because they supply the imagination with abundant materials upon which to work. The people of the United States, for example, were not very much disturbed about the suffering in the concentration camps in the Spanish-Cuban War till Richard Harding Davis, Senator Proctor, and others went to Cuba and brought back vivid word pictures as well as a large number of actual photographs of the horrors which they had witnessed. Then we all woke up.

It is because of the influence of the imagination, again, that we are far more concerned about the good or evil which comes to others when it is identical in kind with some experience of our own in the past. It carries a greater appeal, because we can realize it better; that is, picture it more effectively in the imagination. "He jests at scars that never felt a wound."

A force even more effective than the imagination in awakening and strengthening altruism is love. Unfortunately for the progress of both psychology and ethics love has been treated by many writers as altogether identical with altruism. This view, however, is far from representing the truth. The word *love* is unhappily very ambiguous, but I shall use it as essentially identical with what the psychologists call the "emotion of tenderness." It is, I believe, easy to show that love, thus defined, and altruism are in their own nature very different things. Love is an emotion; altruism, a desire. The desires which love immediately arouses include that for the presence of the beloved. This desire, in itself, may be as selfish as any other. A young man who was graduating from a medical school wished to spend one or two years at a certain great European university where his uncle occupied a distinguished position as professor in the medical faculty. There

seemed to be no obstacles in the way, for the student was neither too young nor too old, he was both gifted and diligent, and there was plenty of money for the supply of his needs. In the end, however, he did not go. The reason assigned by his mother (who ruled the family) was that she loved him too much to let him go away from her for so long a time. Thus love may exist without enough altruism, at any rate, to lead the lover to sacrifice his own pleasure in loving for the sake of the beloved.

Similarly there may be altruism without love. For example, a man sacrifices his life for someone he never saw before; or a man, like Dr. Reed's volunteers for the yellow fever experiments, risks suffering and death for the sake of humanity.

The true relationship between love and altruism is that the former acts as a stimulant to the latter. Of all such agencies it is by far the most powerful. But it does not always work even when as emotion it is both massive and intense. This is because there is little or no altruism for it to work on. But whether it works or not, it and altruism are two perfectly distinct things

Somewhat akin in nature to love is the sense of congeniality, what Professor Giddings has called the "consciousness of kind." By this is meant the feeling of unity which arises from the existence of community of tastes, interests, points of view, etc. Said Samuel Johnson to Boswell: "Sir, I was once in company with [Adam] Smith. We did not take to each other; but had I known that he loved rhyme [in preference to blank verse] as much as you tell me he does, I should have hugged him." [16] In this incident we see the discovery of identity of interest producing a feeling much akin to tender emotion. But tender emotion, as we have seen, is one of the most powerful stimulants of altruism.

Effects similar to those due to "consciousness of kind" may be produced by the belief in blood relationship. One of the most corrupt politicians in the United States, now dead, the representative in the Senate of a great state, was one of the most devoted and one of the wisest friends the American Indians ever had. It is said that he would leave the most important personal business when he heard that their interests were in danger, and drop all other affairs, however pressing, to protect their rights.

[16] Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, Hill's Edition, Vol. I, p. 495.

The initial cause of all this solicitude seems to have been the belief that he had a teaspoonful of Indian blood in his veins.

There is a group of emotions intimately associated with love but by no means identical with it that are capable of stimulating tremendously our interest in the good of their object. They are gratitude, approbation, and admiration. We like to see those whom we admire happy, and are far more ready to make sacrifices for their sake than for those whose mental or moral endowment seems to us mediocre or worse.

The last factor which I shall mention is perhaps the equal in importance of any of the others. It is the awareness of a causal relationship between an act of mine and the state of another person—that relationship which in many cases we call personal responsibility. The injury that *I* have inflicted or am considering inflicting impresses my imagination more forcibly than do others; or if not that, at any rate has a special power of awakening concern for the actual or potential victim. But it should be particularly observed that this influence is not confined to situations for which I can regard myself as *morally* responsible. A lady who was riding in a hired automobile which was being driven at a moderate rate with due care by a trusted chauffeur was almost as deeply shocked when it ran over and seriously injured a child as if the incident had been due to some carelessness of her own. She knew perfectly well that the fault, if fault there can be said to have been, was that of the child. Yet it was she who had ordered the car and sent it down that particular street. This fact made her feelings very different from those of the other witnesses, who really saw more of the actual horror than she did.

Nature has so made the human mind that altruism can act and often produce great results without any stimulation whatever. It has also made altruism in such a way that it is sensitive to a wide range of stimulants which are capable of increasing its effectiveness enormously. This varying susceptibility to what is, when looked at objectively, the same appeal affords an explanation of many of the surprising inconsistencies of human conduct. It supplies the key, moreover, to an understanding of the superficial diversities and the fundamental unity of the moral judgments of the race.

### The Depressants of Altruism

This part of our subject would not be complete without the recognition of the existence, by the side of these stimulants, of a series of agents that operate to depress altruism. There are, of course, the emotions of hatred, disapprobation, disadmiration, and resentment. In addition to these there is another set of forces, among which the most important are familiarity, inattention, and fatigue, including under the last the exhausting effects of disease. Everyone is more or less acquainted with the effects of familiarity with the sight of suffering, especially when we do nothing to relieve it, in blunting our sensitiveness. Thus the author of *Seven Years at Eton* relates how when he first saw a boy flogged at school he was shaken emotionally through and through. But his eyes and nerves soon became accustomed to the sight and later he came to witness it with actual amusement.

### Why Is There More Egoism Than Altruism?

The recognition of the part played in our lives by these stimulants and depressants enables us to explain certain facts which appear to present difficulties to the acceptance of our doctrine of benevolence. If egoism and altruism are but two different directions of the same force, why, it may be asked, is there so much more egoistic action in the world than altruistic?

The answer turns on the cumulative effects of a number of well-known psychological forces. Of these the first in importance is the imagination. Of the many spurs to benevolence this is undoubtedly the most powerful, always excepting the influence of love upon altruism. The effect of any imagined state upon the will tends, as we have seen, to be in direct ratio to the concreteness and completeness (within certain limits) with which it is pictured. Now I can usually imagine my own future more effectively than the present or future state of another, simply because there are more data at the disposal of the imagination in one case than in the other. Suppose, for example, I am considering the purchase of a hundred-dollar rug. I am, of course, well aware that I might spend that money in helping to feed the

starving in the war-ravaged districts of China. But I know precisely how my room looks now with that horrible bare space in the floor; I can easily imagine precisely how it will look covered with a handsome rug, especially if I have seen the rug in a shop window; whereas the sufferings of the Chinese—well, I have never starved to death.

It follows from the preceding that altruism requires, on the average, a broader range of experience and a more highly developed power of imagining than does egoism. Consequently the child is apt to be distinctly more egoistic than altruistic. Thereupon enters a second factor, that of habit. The child begins by thinking of his own interests, and the more they occupy the mind the more they tend to occupy it. Thoughtlessness makes a large part of our indifference to others; and thoughtlessness is nothing more nor less than the habit of thinking so much about our own interests that those of others are either completely pushed aside, or are presented only in a hasty, vague, sketchy fashion. In the grip of these habits almost every human being grows to maturity.

The conditions of social existence reinforce these influences. They involve a struggle for personal ends, and thus narrow still farther the range of facts with which the imagination may build, organize, and fortify its habits of thought. In this struggle altruistic interests often die of mere inanition; there is no time for the exercise that is necessary in order to keep them alive. Often again they perish through the direct attack of such emotions as resentment, envy, or disappointment, which the struggle of life so frequently engenders. These feelings may kill our interest not merely in him who has injured us, but in others also. Bitterness of spirit has carried many a man far along the road which was traveled to the end by the murderer in Macbeth:

> "I am one, my liege,
> Whom the vile blows and buffets of the world
> Have so incensed that I am reckless what
> I do to spite the world." [11]

Thus there grows up a society of narrow interests and low ideals. The more generously constituted nature might often rise

[11] *Macbeth,* Act III, Scene I, ll. 108-111.

above them if it were not for another tendency of the human will, that of imitation. This is the name not of a simple force, but of a congeries of forces. But whatever the exact mechanism of the process, it tends to keep the level of altruism up but also down to the level of that which prevails in the community.

Our confidence in the soundness of these explanations may be fortified by the fact that they include within their scope a large number of collateral phenomena which otherwise must remain unpenetrated mysteries. Thus they show why the average man is so much more interested in the self of tomorrow than in that of twenty years hence; why he is more interested in those persons with whom he has come into direct contact (quite apart from love, the sense of congeniality, and all feelings of this sort) than in those persons whom he has never seen; in those whose experiences have in the main been like his own as compared with those whose manner of life, place of abode, and intellectual or moral qualities separate them from him as inhabitants of a different world. All these phenomena and many more find their place as parts of one self-consistent whole when interpreted as the consequences of the above principles.

This reference to the rôle of the imagination, however, may seem to raise a new difficulty more formidable than the first. If the imagination had so much to do with the bringing into existence of both altruistic and egoistic actions, why are not the most egoistic persons likewise the most altruistic?

The first answer to this question is that demonstrably the least altruistic, at any rate, are the least egoistic; that is to say, they have the least interest in their own remote future. The students of criminal psychology, as we have seen, distinguish a certain class of criminals as "moral imbeciles." These creatures possess so little regard for the victims of their crimes that they feel not the slightest stirring of regret or remorse at the robbery or the murder which is the work of their hands. Now one of the most striking characteristics of these men, according to the concurrent testimony of all the authorities, is precisely their indifference to whatever may happen to themselves at the distance of a very few days. They have been known to enter upon a career of robbery united with murder, which, as they admitted, they

knew at the time must lead to their own death, and that shortly, in order to get money for a week's unstinted and unrestrained debauchery. They listen to the reading of their sentence with indifference and contemplate the approaching execution with composure. Thus they preserve the mind of the Stoic sage until perhaps twenty-four hours before the end. Then realization begins, the horror of black death awakens in their sluggish souls, and they may have to be literally dragged from their cell to the place of execution.

It is my opinion that the same relationship will be found to obtain at the upper end of the scale. The man who is exceptionally altruistic will be precisely the man who most frequently subordinates present interests to remote or permanent ends. With perhaps a greater number of exceptions, the converse, I think, is also true.

The first answer to the difficulty urged above is, thus, that it does not exist. If when you are speaking of egoism you are thinking of a long-range egoism, then this is the kind of egoism that is most completely correlated with altruism. It is the relatively unimaginative egoism of the slave of today that is never found dwelling in the same mind with the altruistic spirit.

Where this is not the case, where the capacity for long-range egoism is found with no corresponding development of the altruistic interests, the results, I think, must be attributed to the influence of the factors enumerated above. The external conditions of the man's life in his childhood or youth started habits of thought in one direction which grew at the expense of the more generous impulses; while the growth of these latter was farther stunted by such forces as imitation, fear, hatred, and bitterness of spirit, stimulated to activity, in many cases, by unfortunate experiences.

### Altruism Not a Miracle

There has been a certain tendency even among those who believe in the existence of altruism to regard it as a kind of miracle. "Altruism," says von Ihering in *Der Zweck im Recht,* "is as wonderful as if water should run up hill." It may be remarked in passing that if water did *not* run up hill it would

certainly not long continue to run down; while no one can seriously maintain that the laws of evaporation are more wonderful than those of gravitation. Von Ihering's argument seems to be somewhat as follows: Altruism is less primitive or less common than egoism. Therefore it is a "miracle." It seems hardly necessary to say that the conclusion does not follow from the premises. The instinct of walking [18] follows that of winking by a number of months in the development of the child, but this does not constitute walking a miracle. Furthermore, the premises themselves are largely a fiction. Egoism, as we have defined it, is no more primitive in the child's mind than is altruism. It is true of him in his second and third years, as Spencer and Gillen say of the Australian savage, that he obeys literally the command of the gospel: "Take no thought for the morrow." His voluntary acts are determined chiefly by unreflective impulse and by desire for a good immediately in front of his eyes; and where this is not the case the range of his effective vision scarcely extends beyond the setting sun. Offer the average three-year-old child a choice between one piece of candy now and two pieces tomorrow, and see which he will take. Yet this same child may be willing to divide today's candy with his mother. A seven-year-old boy of my acquaintance could not be moved by any argument or other form of pressure to devote even the shortest portion of his precious time to earning money as such, though he understood perfectly the function of money as an instrument of future satisfaction. But for a couple of weeks in December he worked with exemplary assiduity to earn money with which to buy his mother a Christmas present. The concrete good of his mother appealed to him more strongly than the abstract good of self. If we must have a general principle, the nearest we can come to it is this: The more completely and vividly the absent state is realized the greater is its power to arouse the will. This, it will be observed, is not formulated and can not be formulated directly in terms of self and others. And even this principle, as we have seen, is limited in its working by a number of others.*

[18] On walking in young children as an instinct, *see* James, *Principles of Psychology*, Vol. II, pp. 405-407; Baldwin, in *Science*, 1892, p. 15; Woodworth, *Psychology*, pp. 95-97.

* See Notes, V, "Sympathy and Altruism," p. 493.

## III

### The Desire to Harm

Side by side with the desire for the good of self and others there may exist the desire for their harm. In some degenerates it takes the form of a delight in malicious cruelty which is never at rest except as it is hunting down some victim.[19] Something of this spirit seems to be present in young children, as is shown by their delight in malicious mischief.

In the average adult it is aroused chiefly by hatred and anger; this intimately related pair thus having an effect upon the desire to harm which is analogous to that of the other allied pair, love and gratitude, upon the desire to serve. We must particularly note that anger is not necessarily the consequence of the belief that one has been wronged. In the first place, whereas everyone admits in principle that morality is a matter of motives, most persons grow thoroughly angry at an attempt to injure them only when it succeeds. The attempt to cheat me, for example, produces in me a certain amount of indignation, whether it is successful or not; but let the same attempt result in the loss of a considerable sum of money and my wrath is likely to be intensified many fold. Again, an act of stupidity or inadvertence which does serious injury, especially when I myself am the victim, has almost as great a tendency to arouse anger in me as does an intended wrong. For resentment, as Westermarck points out, is "an aggressive attitude of mind towards a cause of pain."[20] Furthermore, purely accidental injuries of which I am the victim, which are due neither to wrong intentions, nor carelessness, nor stupidity, have a tendency to arouse the same feelings against the person who happens to be the last link in the chain of causation. Indeed anger may blaze forth against a man whose connection with the injury is wholly external, as Shakespeare's Cleopatra beats the messenger who brings her the information that Antony has married Octavia.[21]

[19] See J. A. Symonds, *The Age of the Despots*, Appendix, "The Blood Madness of the Italian Despots." Compare also Dostoevsky, *The House of the Dead*, "Akulka's Husband," Part II, Ch. IV.

[20] *The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas*, Vol. I, p. 22.

[21] *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act. II, Scene V.

The irritation due to physical pain, and for that matter suffering of any kind, may be visited upon living beings who are not even connected with it in any way whatever, simply because they happen to be there to serve as victims. "I once found a stage driver whipping his horses," writes Francis Lieber in his *Political Ethics,* "far more than seemed to be warranted by a fair desire to get on rapidly. When I expressed my opinion of his cruelty he answered, 'Oh, Sir, if you knew how my teeth ache!' " Usually, however, anger is more discriminating. But many persons, when they can not lay their hands upon the original source of injury, find a large satisfaction in injuring other members of the same class or group.

"Ward, in his *Law of Nations,* narrates the case, in 1292, of two sailors, the one Norman, the other English, who quarreled in the port of Bayonne and began to fight with their fists. The Englishman stabbed the other with his knife; and the local magistrate having failed to take cognizance of the case, the Normans applied to their king who told them to take their own revenge. They instantly put to sea and seized the first English ship they could find and hung up several of the crew and some dogs at the same time at the masthead. The English retaliated without applying to their government, the final consequence being a war between the two countries." [22]

The object of one's destructive wrath may sometimes be an inanimate object. Thus the five-year-old son of an acquaintance of mine in running at full speed from one room to another caught his finger in the crack of the door and hurt it badly. The instant he had received the necessary attention he rushed down into the cellar and returned with a hatchet with which he proposed to chop down the entire house. When this catastrophe was averted he insisted on at least chopping the offending door to pieces. Finally the father persuaded the boy that the accident was really his own fault because he hurt himself while doing that which he had been repeatedly warned not to do. Thereupon he became pacified. This sort of an outbreak is very far from being confined to children. A member of one of my classes witnessed the following incident. In a remote mining camp in Idaho a man was

[22] John B. Moore, "The Peace Problem," *North American Review,* Vol. 204, p. 84.

working with the wick of a lamp which refused to move as smoothly as he desired. Finally he lost his patience and in a burst of anger threw the lamp out of the window, smashing it to pieces. In consequence he and his family (and guests) had nothing in the way of light but one poor candle for over a week. Anger at a man—who is perhaps doing his best to please us—may be taken out on the material object which is the result of his labor. The Russian composer Tschaikowsky writes, as quoted in his biography.

"I took up Victor Hugo's *Toilers of the Sea*. I read and read, and grew more and more irritated by his grimaces and buffoonery. Finally, after a whole series of short, unmeaning phrases, consisting of exclamations, antithesis, and asterisks, I lost my temper, spat upon the book, tore it to pieces, stamped upon it, and wound up by throwing it out of the window."

Some writers claim that in such cases as this we "personify" the object of our wrath. But if "personify" means to believe even for an instant that it is conscious, I can declare upon the testimony of many persons that a man may give a vicious kick to the door which slams in his face or curse a knotted fishline without supposing for a moment that the door or the fishline cares a particle what he says or does.

As we have already seen, the desire to inflict suffering may be directed against self as well as against others.[23] It may be aroused not merely by moral delinquencies of which one is ashamed, but also by acts of stupidity, social gaucheries, fumbling a football at a critical point of a game, and many other mistakes where every effort was being made to do one's best. Probably most persons who are not eaten up by conceit and moral self-complacency have felt anger against self and with it the desire (as a woman once expressed it) "to pound one's head against a stone wall."

This desire to harm for no other reason than that the victim may suffer, whether the desire be or be not aroused or strengthened by anger or any other stimulant whatever, may be called malevolence. We here use the term malevolence, as we did benevolence, in the sense of a desire that may be directed against self as well as against others.*

[23] Chapter II above, page 31.

* See Notes, V, "The Existence of Malevolence," p. 494.

## Chapter VI

# THE SOURCES OF MORAL JUDGMENTS

Our study of the nature of benevolence and malevolence has prepared us to deal with the two fundamental and intimately related problems, the sources of the moral judgments and the meaning of right. We shall begin with the former, which will supply the key for the solution of the latter.

The sources of our moral judgments, I believe, will be found in benevolence and malevolence. The first gives rise to what in Chapter II was called the eudemonic judgment; the second, to the dysdemonic. The evidence for these assertions is now to be presented.

### The Source of the Dysdemonic Judgment

It will be convenient to begin our study with an examination of the source of the dysdemonic judgment. We shall attempt to reach our objective through an examination of the conditions under which the lay conscience will regard a man as justly liable to punishment, and the conditions under which the amount of punishment considered to be due will rise or fall. In order to understand the significance of our data we must remember that there are several reasons why it is generally believed that punishment ought to be inflicted for wrong committed. Among them is the conviction that society ought to protect itself against crime by punishing him who commits it in order to deter other persons from doing the same thing. A second reason is the belief that he who has made another suffer ought to be made to suffer in return, regardless of whether society or any of its members profit by his punishment or not.[1] The former, of course, is an instance of the employment of the eudemonic standard; the latter, of the dysdemonic. Both of these principles are accepted by the average layman, as is shown in an article by Professor Otto and the writer

[1] *Cf.* above, Chapter II, page 31.

in the *International Journal of Ethics* for July, 1910. But the second seems to have a stronger grip than the first, so that when, for whatever reason, the law of retaliation fails to appeal to them, most people show a tendency to think the wrong-doer ought not to be punished at all.

Suppose, for example, that A and B commit precisely the same wrong. Under these conditions the layman may consider it entirely just that A should be punished, but very wrong that B should be punished. In such cases it will be found that, whereas his anger has been excited against A, his vindictive feelings against B have for some reason been softened or blotted out. It seems a fair inference that the judgment, A ought to be punished, has had its source, in this instance at least, in malevolence stimulated by anger.

Examples of this mode of working on the part of the human mind lie all about us. The average man is quite capable of condemning the infliction of punishment when the victim of the wrong is a total stranger, and demanding it when he happens to be an acquaintance, a friend, a member of his own family, or, above all, himself. He is equally capable of reversing his position and condemning the punishment of himself or a son or a friend or anyone with whom he happens to be able to sympathize, while demanding it without mercy for everyone else. He may advocate leniency for an act read about in the newspaper, and press for the utmost rigors of the law for this same act when he has happened to see it himself. Or he may call for punishment only if it has taken place in the immediate past, while if a long period of time has elapsed between the deed and the discovery of the doer so that his feelings about it have had time to cool, he may approve "the beautiful Christian virtue of forgiveness." Once more, his entire attitude towards the wrong-doer is apt to depend to a large extent upon the kaleidoscopic shifting of a lot of inner factors; upon whether he is hungry, for instance, or happens to have just dined comfortably; upon whether he has recently lost or gained ten thousand dollars in a business transaction; and much else of the same sort.[2]

[2] See above, Chapter V, page 90, and below, Chapter VIII, page 136, note.

It may be profitable to examine the facts somewhat more concretely. I shall take as an illustration the attitude of the American public towards the punishment of women criminals.

Fidelity companies in the United States are slow to insure the honesty of women. The reason is that the company's system is based upon ruthless prosecution of the dishonest, and they have great difficulty in securing the conviction of a woman by a jury. It is a matter of common knowledge that, at least in Illinois, and probably in other states where capital punishment obtains, it is practically impossible to convict a murderess, whatever the circumstances of the crime. And according to the newspapers many veniremen in that state assert that they do not believe in capital punishment for women. This view seems to be general throughout the country. How it works in practice is shown by the notorious case of Mrs. Rogers of Vermont.

In 1902 Mrs. Rogers, having driven her husband from his home by her quarrelsomeness, and having fallen violently in love with another man who refused to marry her as long as her husband lived, lured the latter back to his home on the pretense of a reconciliation and killed him in a manner which made the murder "one of the most revolting in New England's criminal annals." There was no doubt whatever about the guilt of the woman or the fairness of the trial. Yet her execution aroused such a storm of indignation against the governor of the state, because, though he reprieved her four times, he refused, in the end, to make a different law for women than for men, that his political life was seriously endangered. At the same time over a hundred men were being hanged every year in different parts of the United States, and the public was taking no particular interest in the fact.

The explanation of these differences in attitude seems to be as follows. The sight or even the picture in the imagination of a woman in distress so moves the masculine heart that indignation against the murder of a disagreeable or tiresome husband is melted, and is replaced with the "soft stirrings of sympathy." It is therefore felt that the unfortunate woman ought not to be punished, at least severely. The statute books, however, declare with cold impartiality that the person who commits theft or

murder shall be punished, without restricting this declaration to the male sex; so the gallant jury, although they may know perfectly well that she committed the crime, save the woman from punishment by finding her "not guilty." Thereupon the larger self-constituted jury outside the court room cry "Amen"; and if, by some chance, she is convicted regard her punishment as an outrage. I venture the guess that even the unimpressionable jurors from the Green Mountain State would have found some excuse for clearing Mrs. Rogers if certain details of the actual execution of the crime had not got very much on their nerves.

In some respects the most striking evidence of the rôle played by anger in the demand for punishment is supplied by the influence of accident. To understand the significance of the following facts we must remember that resentment is "an aggressive attitude of mind towards a cause of pain." It is not apt to be aroused to a very high pitch in the average person, as we have seen, when there has been wrongful intent without actual harm; whereas it tends to blaze forth in all its fury when serious harm has been inflicted without intent during the commission of some minor wrong. Definite traces of this waxing and waning of emotional fervor can be found in the law, which is always, in the long run, a faithful reflection of public opinion. Thus there is ordinarily an enormous difference between the penalties imposed for a successful and an unsuccessful attempt at homicide, although obviously the moral quality of the act remains the same whether the bullet hits or misses. In the State of Wisconsin, for example, the extreme penalty provided by statute in the former case is imprisonment for life; in the latter, a term in the penitentiary not exceeding ten years in length.

If, on the other hand, death is caused by accident during the prosecution of a minor offense, the penalty for the latter, in many jurisdictions, will be very greatly increased.

"According to the present law of England, though a person is not criminally liable for the involuntary and unforeseen consequences of acts which are themselves permissible, the case is different if he commits an act which is wrong and criminal, or, as it seems, even if he commits an act which is wrong without being forbidden by law. Thus death caused unintentionally is regarded as murder if it takes place within a year and a day as the result of an unlawful act which amounts to a felony. For

instance, a person kills another accidentally by shooting at a domestic fowl with intent to steal it, and he will probably be convicted of murder . . . So far as I know the severity of the English law on unintentional homicide—which, in fact, is a survival of ancient Teutonic law—is without a parallel in the European legislation of the present day . . . yet the unintended deadly consequence of a criminal act always affects the punishment more or less."[3]

Farther evidence of the place of anger in the dysdemonic judgment may be found in the demand, well-nigh universal in primitive life and occurring sporadically well up the scale of civilization, that animals be punished for harm done by them. This attitude has not entirely disappeared among ourselves. A few years ago, in a river town in the West, a three-year-old girl was playing on the sidewalk in front of her house. Someone let out the family dog—a great, ungainly, Newfoundland pup. The dog made straight for the child, and expressed his joy at seeing his youthful mistress by jumping about her and finally on her, thereby throwing her violently against the stone wall that separated the yard from the street. As a result the child's skull was very badly fractured. Some of the men employed along the river were heard to express their surprise that the owner of the dog, the little girl's father, did not kill him. This spirit may be carried so far as to call for the punishment of inanimate objects, as the ax which by accident glances aside and wounds a bystander. The facts have been collected by Westermarck, in Chapter X of the work just referred to, where the same explanation will be found as that which is here offered.

These facts, taken in their entirety, seem to me to permit of but one conclusion. In a variety of conditions we have seen the presence or absence of anger a determining factor in the judgment that punishment ought or ought not to be inflicted. But anger operates by stimulating malevolence. Malevolence thus appears as a source of moral judgments—those, namely, which we have classed as dysdemonic.

[3] Westermarck, *The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas*, Vol. I, p. 238. See on this general subject the entire chapter (IX).

### The Source of the Eudemonic Judgment

The source of our eudemonic judgments, I have asserted, is benevolence. The following appear to be the principal reasons for accepting this view. In the first place, it seems a fair inference from our study of the cause of the dysdemonic judgment. This study shows, I believe, that desire is capable of giving rise to moral judgments. If desire for harm is the source of the approbation of the aim to inflict harm, the inference seems little short of inevitable that the desire for good is the source of the approbation of the forbearance from harm and the aim to do good.

This conclusion is confirmed by a second line of evidence. The relation of malevolence to the dysdemonic judgment was revealed by a study of the variations which this judgment exhibits under varying conditions. In the same way the manifold forms assumed by the eudemonic judgment point unmistakably, it seems to me, to benevolence as its source. This will be evident if we bring together the data supplied by Chapters III and V. When interests conflict, as we remember, the layman may regard any one of a number of choices as right: the greater good, the more striking good, the good of the nearer, the good of the more excellent. The first I will pass for the moment, as there may be room for differences of opinion as to its cause. But the phenomena brought together under the caption, "the more striking good," unmistakably represent the influence of the imagination. The third type of judgment is most easily explained as a consequence of the influence of love, the feeling of congeniality, and the belief in blood relationship; while the fourth seems to owe its existence to admiration, which is the feeling with which we react to the spectacle of human excellence.

Now imagination, love, the feeling of congeniality, belief in blood relationship, and admiration, have, as far as I can see, only one characteristic in common; they are capable (as we learned in Chapter V) of strengthening or intensifying benevolence. The simplest way, therefore, of explaining the facts of Chapter III is to say that we approve the choice of the more striking good because we desire its attainment more than we do

that of the less striking good, the cause of this difference being the stimulating influence of the imagination upon benevolence. The same explanation may be applied to approbation of the choice of the good of the nearer and of the more excellent. The judgment that the greater good has the superior claim falls in line very simply and naturally with the preceding phenomena. Other things being equal the desire for more of a good thing will be stronger than the desire for less. It is obvious, then, why the choice of the greater good is approved if the eudemonic judgment has its source in the desire for the good of conscious beings.

Sometimes, indeed, we seem almost to see benevolence, under the impulsion of imagination or love, in the act of determining the outcome of the judging process. An eighth-grade boy who had been guilty of persistent pilfering in the school-garden, went to this same garden one morning to pick his own carefully tended watermelon and found that it had disappeared during the night. Thereafter he took a very different attitude toward theft. He had been stealing repeatedly without the slightest compunction; but the minute he found himself the victim of another's disregard of property rights, a new light dawned on his mind. He went to his principal, spontaneously confessed the wrongs he had committed, and promised there should be no repetition—a promise which was faithfully kept. "I never knew before how it felt to lose a thing you had worked for," was the explanation he gave of his change of heart. Other illustrations of the same principle will be found in Chapter VIII, page 120.

Our conclusion seems to me to be strengthened by the existence of moral "blind spots," in consequence of which noble deeds and great wrongs may be looked upon with equal indifference. These blind spots may be congenital or acquired, sporadic in their appearance and limited in extent, as with everyday men and women, or chronic and all-pervasive, as with moral imbeciles. They may be the product of environment or the consequence of native poverty of endowment. Their distribution certainly presents problems far beyond the power of contemporary psychology to solve. But it is ordinarily possible to demonstrate that their boundaries are coterminous with the absence of altruism; that is to say, where there is moral blindness extending

over a particular field, small or great, there also the judge will be found to be indifferent to the good or harm involved. This is eminently the case where the entire mind is one unbroken blind spot, as far as moral issues are concerned, that is to say, among moral imbeciles. Their complete indifference to the good of their fellow-men—except here and there—is too notorious to admit of doubt. If other explanations of this relationship between moral apathy and the absence of altruism are conceivable, certainly that which is here offered has the merit of simplicity and entire compatibility with the facts of the preceding paragraphs.

All in all the many and diverse phenomena exhibited by our moral judgments fit so completely the theory which finds their source in benevolence or malevolence, and are so difficult to combine with any other that the explanation here proposed seems inescapable.

### Morality Has Its Source in Ideals of Conduct

We may generalize the preceding conclusions by saying that morality has its source in desire for the existence of certain volitions. Any comprehensive object of desire is called an ideal. Hence this formula may be made to read: The source of our moral judgments lies in our ideals—ideals of conduct and character. The term *moral standard*, which we have been using from the beginning of our work, is, accordingly, but another name for a moral ideal.

### Why Good Motives Are Desired as Well as Good Results

A number of objections have been urged against theories of the type just presented.* One of them will be discussed in the next Chapter. Another will be answered by implication later on. There are two, however, which I wish to deal with explicitly in this place.

The existence of benevolence, as everyone would admit, is capable of explaining why we object to actions that have injurious results, and why we desire those of the opposite kind. But some moralists contend that it can not explain why we care what motives lie behind the outer acts. If it is desire for conse-

*See Notes, VI, "A List of Objections to the Thesis of Chapter VI, p. 495.

quences that creates moral distinctions, then, provided the results are satisfactory, what difference does it make what motives produced them? I reply that whatever reason there is for desiring actual results in the way of human welfare holds equally of the desire for volitions which are directed to the attainment of these results. For where the motives are bad the good results come only by accident, and therefore can not be counted upon with confidence a second time. This is why an employer regards as a very serious matter an attempt at dishonesty on the part of an employee which may have been frustrated in time to prevent loss to himself, or which may even—through some combination of circumstances—have actually resulted in a benefit to him. This is why he demands from a prospective employee some evidence of good character. This is why the public care, or would care if they were wise, what are the motives of their representatives in the legislative or other offices of the state. As long as the interests of the public and those of the politician coincide it may make no "practical" difference what his real principles are. But suppose these interests diverge. Then, even though the only thing we care about is results, it will make an enormous difference whether he was moved by ambition and a love of money or by public spirit. There exists a perfect parallel in this respect between character and intellect. The business man looking for a clerk wants intelligence because he wants the fruits of intelligence, and he does not expect to get the former ordinarily except from the latter. It is true that "fortune brings in some boats that are not steered"—but not many. Similarly, in the long run, we shall get the fruits of character only from character. There are important reasons besides these why the benevolent man desires human actions to be moved by good motives. These will be considered in Chapter X. But the reasons here assigned would be sufficient in the absence of all others.

We may reach the same conclusion by looking at the problem from a slightly different angle. Wherever voluntary action takes place we find two things: a volition to produce certain results, and the results that actually take place. If the results produced are different from the results willed, evidently, in case they are bad, the fault lies not with the volition, but with conditions out-

side the man's character, as ignorance or the play of chance. These act as an unforeseen puff of wind may act to deflect a perfectly aimed arrow away from the bull's-eye for which it started. Hume writes:

"Why is this peach tree said to be better than that other, but because it produces more or better fruit. And would not the same praise be given it, though snails or vermin had destroyed the peaches before they came to their full maturity? In morals, too, is not the *tree known by the fruit?* And can not we easily distinguish between nature and accident in the one case as well as in the other?"[4]

## Is Altruism Too Weak to Serve as the Foundation of Moral Action?

The second objection which I propose to consider has to do with the rôle of altruism—of benevolence directed to others than self—as a motive of human conduct. It is sometimes claimed that altruism is too weak a force in the average human being to account for the sacrifices that are often made in the performance of duty. Adam Smith, the famous author of the *Wealth of Nations,* presents this difficulty in a vigorous criticism of the ethical writings of his friend, David Hume. He says:

"The man who gives up his pretensions to an office that was the great object of his ambition because he imagines that the services of another are better entitled to it; the man who exposes his life to defend that of his friend, which he judges to be of more importance, neither of them act from humanity [altruism] or because they feel more exquisitely what concerns the other person than what concerns themselves. . . The soldier who throws away his life in order to defend that of his officer would perhaps be little affected by the death of that officer if it should happen without any fault of his own; and a very small disaster which had befallen himself might incite a very much more lively sorrow. . . There is many an honest Englishman who in his private station would be more seriously disturbed by the loss of a guinea than by the national loss of Minorca, who yet, had it been in his power to defend that fortress, would have sacrificed his life a thousand times rather than, through his fault, have let it fall into the hands of the enemy."

In other words, we may make the greatest sacrifices of personal interest in order that others may not be injured at our hands, or we may run the greatest risks to rescue them from

[4] *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals,* Sec. V, part II.

loss or danger, when, if a similar misfortune should happen to them without any responsibility, direct or indirect, on our part, we should feel quite indifferent about the matter. Hence it is inferred the motive for such sacrifices must be something other than altruism, or direct interest in their welfare.[5]

The subject matter of ethics is primarily not actions but judgments upon actions. But we can not evade the difficulty before us by running to this definition for shelter. For moral judgments, being the expression of an ideal, have a very intimate relation to conduct. My moral judgments represent the way I want human beings as such to act, and the term *human beings* includes me. An ideal is a mere combination of words unless it has motive force and appeals to the will. Furthermore, it must possess sufficient power to enable it to overcome the opposition of egoistic desires, at least at times. Otherwise, it is a mere product of sentimentalism. If, then, altruism is anything more than empty talk or shallow feeling, it must possess sufficient strength in some people, sometimes, to control even the strongest egoistic desire. After the battle of Santiago in the Spanish-American War a wounded soldier reopened his wound and died of exhaustion as a result of carrying water for two strangers lying next to him. When they refused to take the water which he had obtained by painfully and slowly crawling to a small puddle at what must have seemed an interminable distance, he urged it upon them, saying: "You have home and families to live for. I have none." Returning, then, to the objection raised by Adam Smith, can we suppose that if the families of those two soldiers whose lives were thus saved had been deprived of husband and father in some manner entirely unconnected with the life of our hero, and he had known of the fact, it would have given him five minutes of genuine distress? The question answers itself. How then could the motive which led him to undergo the torture and danger of a reopened wound and burning thirst (for there was no water left for him)—how could this motive have been a direct

[5] *Theory of Moral Sentiments,* Bohn Edition, Part IV, Ch. II; pp. 274-276. The conclusion stated in the text is not quite identical with that drawn by Smith, but is near enough for our purposes, and is the conclusion which has actually been drawn from these facts in most cases by the opponents of the view we are defending.

interest in the fate of these families, the members of which he had never even seen?

In many cases of self-sacrifice there is no puzzle to be explained. A mother gives up ease and pleasure and conquers fatigue and physical weakness for the sake of her sick child, because love makes her care for its welfare more than for her own. Again the sight of misery tends to open our minds to its reality ("If we all ate at the same table, no one would be allowed to go hungry"), and the sensitive man feels concern for it as directly as for the most concretely apprehended elements of his own future. This fact accounts easily and simply not merely for his attempts to relieve immediately observed suffering, but for many refusals to inflict harm upon others for the sake of personal gain. Some years ago the newspapers announced the existence of a ring whose members were making fortunes by enticing seventh- and eighth-grade school children into the use of cocaine and opium. The ordinary man certainly does not lie awake nights picturing the agonies of these unfortunate victims. But if he were offered fifty thousand dollars a year to take part in the traffic, he would say to himself: "I could never stand it. The sight of those children's faces would poison my happiness, and leave me not a moment of peace either day or night."

Certain strong emotions, then, and a vivid realization of another's conscious life tend to shake the mind out of its habitual lethargy, and to arouse the same interest in another's good that one feels in his own. This fact supplies us with the first clue for the solution of our problem.

A second is afforded by the effects of the recognition of a causal connection between one's own self and the state of another person, as set forth above in Chapter V, page 83. We often call this the sense of moral responsibility; but, as we have already seen, it is a special case of a broader principle. Wherever I find that through the faulty operation of any element of my mind, be it intellect or will, another person has been harmed, I tend to become immediately interested in the victim. Thus if I break a man's ribs by using poor judgment in handling my car in a tight place, or plunge him into poverty by recommending, in perfect good faith, an investment which turns out to be unsound, I shall,

if I am up to the average level of my race, feel greatly distressed at the result, and may in many cases want to make every reparation in my power. This characteristic of the mind produces not merely a desire to relieve immediate suffering, but also a desire to avoid the inflicting of pain. More than this, as was also pointed out in Chapter V, even when the connection between my act and your harm is purely accidental, so that I can neither reproach my will nor my intellect for any part in it, I still feel much the same concern. Indeed any sort of a personal relationship to a misfortune, however remote this relationship may be, is sufficient to transport some exceptionally sensitive minds across the great gulf that separates self from its neighbor. A lady was in a car driven by her husband which dragged a young child for a distance of a hundred feet. She herself was on the back seat and could under no conceivable circumstances have done anything herself. There could be no possibility of blaming the driver, nor in fact does the wife blame him in the slightest degree. Furthermore, by some miracle, the child escaped unhurt. Nevertheless, although more than six months had elapsed between the time of this incident and its narration to me, the lady declared that she had been unable since that day to ride in a car with any pleasure, and that she had given up the idea which she had previously entertained of learning to drive.

A causal connection between my act and your welfare, even where the connection is remote, may thus serve to arouse directly my interest in you, and make me desire to treat you, or wish to have treated you, as I would have you treat me.

There is, however, still another reason why I may make serious sacrifices for others when the good or evil fortune of the man who directly benefits would not seriously affect my feelings if it were due to causes other than my own conduct. The best actions of some men owe their existence, not so much to the interest in the person immediately affected, as to a strong desire for the establishment or maintenance of a certain type of social relationship. I may be honest, where dishonesty would appear profitable to me, because I want a society in which men are honest; and I may be kind because I want a society in which men are kind; so that I do my part as a means to this end. No one will have

this desire unless he has some interest in the individuals who constitute this society. Zero multiplied by a million still gives zero. But one multiplied by a million is a million. Accordingly if I look at my actions in the light of their social effects I may feel a concern for these effects which is out of all proportion to my concern for the immediate beneficiary. Furthermore, it must not be forgotten that there enter here, just as in the desire to defend one's native country against a foreign invader, considerations of self-interest and love of family and friends. For we all profit alike by membership in a social organization every one of whose parts is sound and in healthy interaction with every other.[6]

But there is one more consideration that may be urged in meeting Adam Smith's doubts which is far more fundamental and comprehensive than any that has yet been presented. Smith assumes that the strength of the desire, in other words, the amount of effort we are willing to put forth is proportionate to the amount of sorrow or disappointment we should feel if the end were not attained. This is very far from being the truth. The best evidence for my contention is obtainable from our attitude towards our own good. A host sat at a table loaded with a great variety of delicious viands, for his wife was what is called "a good housekeeper." He himself, however, having been for several years a half invalid, was eating his regular meal of mush and milk. A guest asked him if he did not sometimes feel an almost intolerable longing for the good things which his table offered in such abundance. His reply was: "I never think anything about it any more." In other words, he had lost all feeling on the subject. But from this it could not be inferred that he would not have eaten with the others if the physician had given him permission. Much the same thing may be said, though for slightly different reasons, with regard to wealth. Many a man would work to the limit of his powers for many years to become a millionaire. Yet, knowing that this is forever impossible, he does not for this reason, provided he has a competence, become

[6] For another explanation of the love of a smoothly running and closely knit social organism, supplementary to rather than in conflict with that presented above, see Smith, *op. cit.*, Part IV, Ch. I, Bohn Edition, p. 265.

either sad or bitter. What is true of "present" good is true of future good and ill. Suppose a physician to be able to convince a man of thirty that he was doomed to die at fifty unless he adopted a certain rigorous régime or abandoned some habit such as drinking coffee. Many men would thereupon make the necessary exertions, however unpleasant. But suppose a physician should convince a man of thirty that he was doomed to die at fifty and that nothing could save him. He would in many instances not feel particularly distressed at the prospect thus placed before him. It certainly must have happened in the experience of almost everyone to strive long and vigorously for a certain personal end, turning the back upon passing pleasures, occasions of ease, and much else dear to the natural man, and then to fail of attainment. Yet the pain of disappointment felt at this result has proved to be almost absurdly brief in duration and slight in intensity in comparison with the extent and intensity of the effort—certainly a kindly disposition of Nature. This is precisely what happens in the relation of an altruistic man to the welfare of his neighbors. If he can help them or spare them harm, either by overt act or forbearance, he will gladly do so. If he can not, he ordinarily finds no difficulty in dismissing their troubles from his mind and feels little or no emotional disturbance about the matter. This is also a kindly disposition of Nature. But as in the case of self, so in the case of others, the want of feeling is no evidence for the want of good will.

My conclusion is that the average decent person has a good deal more altruism (not merely of the latent kind referred to in Chapter V, page 70, but of the ready-for-service variety) than he perhaps thinks he has; at all events than some writers, who do not deny its existence, think he has; and that the amount of this altruism, in connection, at least, with certain forces to be mentioned in Chapter X, suffices to account (1) for the warmth of his reactions to good and bad conduct in the way of moral judgments, and (2) the sacrifices he is willing to make for the sake of others, both in the way of forbearances and of acts of positive service.

## Chapter VII

# THE MEANING OF RIGHT

Curiously enough most moralists make no attempt to define the term *right*. This neglect on their part is due, I presume, to a failure to distinguish the problem of meaning from that of standard. Yet it is easy to show that the two are anything but identical. Suppose, for example, I assert with Aristotle that those actions are right which represent a mean between two extremes (as true courage is a mean between cowardice and rashness), or with Francis Hutcheson that those actions are right which "procure the greatest happiness for the greatest numbers." The question still remains, What do I mean by calling such actions *right?* To say, for example, that right *means* "procuring the greatest happiness for the greatest numbers" is to say: "Those actions procuring the greatest happiness for the greatest numbers procure the greatest happiness for the greatest numbers." The problem of standards of right, discussed in Chapters II and III, is thus one thing; the problem of the meaning of right, a very different thing.

### The Meaning of Right

Our quest for a definition of *right* starts from the following assertion: The source of the eudemonic judgment is benevolence, or the desire for the good of conscious beings; that of the dysdemonic judgment is malevolence, or the desire for their harm. The source of all moral judgments is thus desire. For me to call a volition right, then, means that I believe it to be such as I, in virtue of my benevolence or malevolence, as the case may be, desire should control the actions of men under the given conditions. To call it wrong is to assert that I believe it to be in conflict with the demands of benevolence (or malevolence). To call it morally indifferent or innocent means that my benevolence (or malevolence) feels no interest in it, one way or the other.

This definition, as it stands, is open to a serious objection.

It might be urged equally against the rôle here attributed to either benevolence or malevolence. For the sake of brevity, however, I shall examine it only with reference to the former, since whatever may be alleged against or for the one applies equally, in principle, to the other.

Benevolence, the objection would run, is subject to a great number of influences, some of which stimulate it in certain specific directions while others act as depressants. In consequence its actual workings are about as capricious as the weather. The welfare of self, for example, tends to interest us more than that of most other persons; [1] that of the members of our family more than that of our friends; that of our friends more than that of our acquaintances; that of our acquaintances more than that of total strangers. The same thing is true of our fellow-countrymen in comparison with foreigners and of our contemporaries in comparison with those who lived a hundred years ago or who will live a hundred years hence. An incident which we ourselves have witnessed, such as a refusal to relieve undeserved and helpless poverty, or an automobile collision due to excessive speed, makes us feel very differently from one about which we have only heard or read. And our feelings in the latter case are apt to depend upon the vividness and completeness with which the narrator brings the situation home to our imagination. An incident which we can realize because we have been through just such an experience before, impresses us far more profoundly than one which we know only through having viewed it from the outside. The robbery or oppression of those whom we see from day to day, especially if we happen to be acquainted with them, particularly if we do not know the oppressor, above all if he is not a member of our family to say nothing of being ourself, arouses far more sympathy for the victims than if they are to us merely a mass of unknown men and women living for all practical purposes in a different world from our own. But with all these variations in the direction and strength of our benevolence, what is really right or wrong, as we all admit, remains right or wrong, unchanged. Wrong does not become right or *vice versa* merely be-

[1] It will be remembered that the regard for self is a part of benevolence as we use the term.

cause the action took place a hundred years ago instead of this morning, because I did not happen to see it myself, or because I have happened, at some time in the past, to be in a similar position myself, or because one of the persons concerned happens to be an acquaintance, a member of my family, or myself. Therefore, it may be urged, judgments of right and wrong do not depend upon benevolence at all, but have some other source in the mind.

This difficulty is met by noting that when I say, "This conduct is right," as distinguished from "This is the conduct I desire," I believe myself to be looking at it from a particular point of view. Thus if a man is planning to start a grocery store opposite mine my egoism will rejoice if an unexpected failure to obtain the necessary credit renders it impossible for him to carry out his purpose. But I shall not call his proposed action wrong unless I suppose a third party, conversant with all of the facts of the situation, and weighing his interests and mine with entire impartiality, would disapprove it. Similarly when I call an act involving other persons wrong, as the unnecessary forcing of a debtor into bankruptcy, I suppose my judgment to be uninfluenced by the fact that one of the parties concerned happens to be a member of my family while the other is not, or a friend as distinguished from a stranger. I suppose, too, that I have eliminated the chance effects upon my imagination of the fact that I have or have not witnessed the act, that I once met one of the parties, or that I am familiar with the place where it happened. In a word, when I call an action right or wrong, I suppose that my attitude is not determined by my personal relationships to it, whatever the character of these relationships may be. Only that conduct can properly be called right which is desired when it is looked at from an impersonal point of view.

We might accordingly define right conduct as that which is desired when it is looked at from an impersonal point of view. Such a definition would be correct, as far as it goes, and practically useful. I shall not hesitate to employ it whenever I have occasion to do so. But as a definition it labors under the defect of being a statement in negative terms; it is what I desire when I do not take a certain point of view. The positive definition

however, emerges from the negative. The conduct which I desire when I have eliminated all the accidental relations of self to the parties concerned represents the way I wish A to treat B, whoever A and B may be; whether I happen to be related to or acquainted with either of them or not; whether they are living and suffering or enjoying today, or whether they died a hundred years ago; whether their home is in the same block with mine, or in Siberia. A right volition, then, may be defined as that volition which I desire should control the actions of all human beings who are in the particular situation under consideration. Or, in slightly less exact language, when I call a volition right, I believe it represents the way I want everyone to treat everyone else under the same conditions.

Both the first and the second "everyone," in the above formula, of course include self. If I object to stealing on the part of others when I myself am not the victim, I must object to it on the part of myself also. It goes without saying that if I am contemplating the rifling of my neighbor's pockets, opposing considerations may enter which overrule the objection. But if I really object to stealing as such, I shall, in the midst of my thievery, still wish that I could get the money through some other means.

Our definition explains, or rather is simply another statement of the familiar maxim that what is right for one is right for everyone else under the same conditions. This maxim is no discovery of moralists but is recognized and employed by every six-year-old boy. Of course, I do not mean that he goes about reciting this formula to himself, any more than he has ever said or thought to himself: "Of two contradictory propositions one must be false." But he can apply it in the concrete, none the less. Thus you may hear him say to his father: "You will not let *me* talk when there is company at dinner, but *you* talk;" or, "You whipped me for telling a lie to you, but you told a lie to the conductor when he asked you how old I was." And when he does not dare make these accusations to his father's face, he thinks them—often in bitterness of spirit. It is this use of a standard of conduct, applicable in principle to everyone, that marks the birth of the moral judgment alike in the individual and the race.*

* See Notes, VII, "What are 'the Same Conditions'?" p. 497.

### The Distinction between Valid and Invalid Moral Judgments

From the preceding definition of *right* follows a very important consequence. We are constantly using the term *right* as the predicate of a moral judgment when as a matter of fact the conduct so denominated does not conform to the definition. We believe it does, indeed, but we may be mistaken about what we really want just as about anything else. Thus when I call it wrong for another business organization to entice away from my office my most valued clerk by the offer of a salary higher than I can afford to pay, I *believe* I want business men to refrain from taking good employees away from their employers; but what I may really want is merely that no one should take away *my* employees. Hence arises the distinction between *true* and *false, correct* and *incorrect* moral judgments. My moral judgment is *correct* if it expresses accurately the way in which I wish people to treat each other under the given conditions; in other words, if it conforms to the definition of *right*. For technical use a better term than *correct* is *valid,* because this means genuine, or that which really is what it is believed to be.

The difficulty, then, which appeared to be involved in defining *right* in terms of desire is met by pointing out that our judgments of right may have their source in desire and yet represent something very different from the demands of the passing feeling with which we chance to look upon a particular situation. The search for this "something" has not merely yielded our definition, it has provided the explanation for that familiar phenomenon, the characterization of moral judgments as true or false.

### The Place of Approbation and Thankfulness in the Moral Judgment

When I am expressing my moral judgments I may use either one of two sets of terms. I may refer to *the act itself,* calling it right, or praiseworthy, or something similar. Or I may use terms which point expressly to *my attitude towards* the act, saying that I approve or disapprove it. What, then, do I mean when I say, "I approve," or "I disapprove?" The answer is simple. To

approve anything—whether an action, a fountain pen, or a cook —is to feel satisfaction at the thought of its existence. But this definition takes us directly back to desire. For the feeling of satisfaction is always due to desire. It is the feeling which arises, or tends to arise when our desire for the existence of anything has been realized.

When satisfaction or dissatisfaction is felt because conduct conforms or fails to conform to our desires, gratitude or resentment tends to arise towards the agent who produced the result. These fuse with the emotions of satisfaction and dissatisfaction and create a whole which is very different from the bare satisfaction or dissatisfaction itself. They account very largely for the warmth and vigor of our feelings toward the good action and the good man, and the bad action and the bad man, respectively. The anger, or resentment, aroused by the non-realization of the desires which are the source of the moral judgment is called *moral indignation.* For the opposite emotion the English language has only the term *moral thankfulness.* Moral approbation is thus a fusion of satisfaction and thankfulness, aroused by the attitude towards good or harm exhibited in human volitions.*

The state of mind called "approving" contains in its complete form, as appears from the above description, two elements, namely, thought and emotion. Under some circumstances, the latter may disappear entirely. In such cases what we mean when we say we approve a given action is that we believe if certain conditions were not operating to counteract or destroy it, we should be feeling approbation. This belief is due ordinarily, or at least often, to the recognition of the action as belonging to the class which normally arouses this feeling, as faithfulness to a promise. The counteracting conditions are such as those which we have already described as tending to kill benevolence, and which may be equally fatal to a vigorous malevolence; namely, vague, sketchy, and hazy thoughts of the conduct and its consequences, preoccupation of the attention with other affairs, or dulling of the sensibility through habituation or through fatigue in any of its forms. The same phenomenon may take place in our judgment that a story is humorous or a scene beautiful.

*See Notes, VII, "Gratitude Towards Self," p. 498.

"I have seen views in the tropics in which I could intellectually recognize all the elements of beauty, so that I gave in a verbal adhesion to the proposition that they were lovely, while at the same time they utterly failed to produce in me the faintest thrill of pleasure [because of the influence of the climate in depressing the tone of the nervous system]. Photographs of the same places, seen now under an English sky and an English nervous diathesis, strike me as exquisitely beautiful."[2]

There are several reasons why it is important to notice that in approbation where an emotion is not present it is latent. One is that the ignoring of this fact seems to have been one of the causes which has led many moralists to suppose that the moral judgment is a purely intellectual process, like the apprehension of the truths of mathematics.*

## The Nature of Conscience

The preceding analysis enables us to define the term *conscience*. Conscience means, in common speech, that by which conduct is judged right or wrong. According to some systems of ethics the moral judgment has its source in one special power, or "faculty," or corner of the mind. If our account of the matter is correct the moral judgment is the reaction of the mind as a whole in favor of some kinds of conduct and in opposition to others. The moral judgment can not operate except as we use our capacity for thought—what the psychologists call intellect. For it involves the idea of an action and an idea of the situation within which the action takes place. Among the ideas concerned must be those of effects. These are gained through the instrumentality of the senses. Then there is the reaction of desire to the idea of the action, with its normal consequences, the emotions of satisfaction or dissatisfaction and thankfulness or indignation. We thus see that our moral judgment involves the activity of every department of the mind. Conscience therefore may be defined as the mind as a whole engaged in passing judgment upon volitions.

The term *conscience* is sometimes confined to that power or

[2]Grant Allen, *Physiological Æsthetics*, p. 56.

*See Notes, VII, "The Moral Judgment Is Not an Artificial Device Invented to Increase the Amount of Socially Useful Action," p. 498.

those powers by which we pass judgment upon our own conduct. But as these are identical with the powers by which we judge other persons, this limitation is purely arbitrary.

### A Summary and a Look Forward

The moral judgment represents an attitude taken towards actions, or more accurately, towards volitions. We may think of it, if we wish, as a response to a stimulus, or to a situation actual or conceived. With regard to such a judgment we may ask the following questions:

1. Finding that volitions A, B, C, D, etc. arouse a response of a certain kind we may ask, What is the quality or what are the qualities common to these volitions, in consequence of which they call forth the response? If there turns out to be no quality common to all, we must group those stimuli together which do possess a common quality, dividing them thereby into classes. The common quality which produces judgments of approval forms our standards, a standard being precisely that characteristic of a volition which arouses a favorable response. The fundamental standards, as we have learned, are two in number, the eudemonic and the dysdemonic. An inquiry dealing with the nature and number of our standards is thus an inquiry directed to the stimulus.

2. We may ask, on the other hand, what is the nature of the response and what is its source in the mind? That is to say, what is there in the structure and processes of the mind which causes it to respond to volitions as it does? The discussion of the existence and nature of benevolence and malevolence, of the meaning of right, and of the source of the moral judgment, attempts to answer these questions.

3. Finally, there is a third problem. Is the response ever evoked by a volition only because the volition appears to be different from what it really is? If so, the terms *true* and *false*, or *valid* and *invalid* may properly be applied to our judgments. Here accordingly emerges a new set of problems: How distinguish between valid and invalid judgments, and which of our judgments are the former and which are the latter? These form the subject matter of Chapter VIII.

## Chapter VIII

# THE VALID STANDARD AND ITS RIVALS

With a definition of *right* in our possession we are at length prepared to deal with the great problem: What volitions—if any—are valid or really right? We here enter the field of normative ethics and attempt to separate our judgments into two groups, those which are to be accepted, and those to be rejected.

The direction of our inquiry is determined by our definition. When I call a volition right, I mean that I believe it to be such a one as I desire should determine the action of everyone under the same conditions. All judgments of mine which conform to this definition and its implications are valid; those which fail to conform are invalid. We shall now try to discover whether the application of this test will compel us to cast aside all the standards which we are in the habit of applying save one. If so, the survivor of this sifting process, as the only one that can meet the test, will emerge as the ultimate and universal standard of right and wrong.

### Objective and Subjective Valuation

We shall begin our investigation with a study of the eudemonic judgment, leaving the dysdemonic for future consideration. We shall start with those forms of this judgment which arise where there is a conflict between mutually exclusive interests, such as those described above in Chapter III. The question which the judge must then decide is: Which alternative ought the agent to accept? All the answers to this question fall into one of two classes. In the first the judgment is based upon an estimate of the relative importance to the parties concerned of the interests affected by the action. Where the judge uses this standard he will regard that volition as right which aims at the greater good, or, where harm is inevitable, the less harm.[1] We shall find it con-

[1] This statement disregards, for the sake of simplicity, possible qualitative differences between goods, or differences on a scale of higher and lower.

venient to have a name for the mental process in which we weigh the claims of competing interests in accordance with their actual importance for each of the parties under consideration. I shall call such an estimate an "objective valuation". Any valuations in conflict with an objective valuation I shall call "subjective valuations". They are all due, in the last resort, to one of two causes. One of these I shall leave for later treatment (page 126 ff.). The other is the one-sided working of certain stimulants of benevolence. Of these the most important are the imagination, and what I may call our liking for the person or party in question. The latter term includes love, the feeling of congeniality, the sense of nearness produced by a belief in community of blood, and admiration with its allied feelings, as described in Chapter V. If these forces operated so as to arouse our benevolence in proportion to the objective value of the various interests at stake they would of course make no difference in the judgment. This is a possible contingency and may happen perhaps not infrequently. But in many cases they act upon the ideas before the mind as a searchlight does upon a landscape, illuminating every detail in one part of the field, and throwing the rest of it into a deeper darkness. And between these two extremes all possible intermediate effects are to be found. A one-sided valuation arises, accordingly, when some stimulant engages benevolence in behalf of one party to the partial or total exclusion of the other, in contradiction to the objective importance of the interests at stake.

What is meant by saying that a stimulant may act upon the mind as a search-light upon a landscape may be illustrated by the following incident. Some years ago a painting was exhibited in various cities of the United States entitled "The Christians Thrown to the Lions". It represented, of course, a group of Christians being torn to pieces by lions in the Roman arena. A certain pious mother took her son, aged eight, to see this picture in the hope of creating in his mind a living sense of some of the great tragedies of church history. The youthful pagan gazed at the painting for several minutes so intently that the mother felt sure

This problem will be taken up in Chapter XX. Its solution will not affect the present study, one way or the other. For a more detailed account of the standard here under discussion, see above Chapter III, page 38 ff.

it had produced a deep impression. Then he shouted: "Oh, mother, mother! There is one poor lion that hasn't got any Christian."

Carrying our analogy of the search-light a step farther, and substituting the stage of a theater for the outdoor world upon which the search-light commonly plays, we may speak of a subjective valuation as a *spot-light* valuation, and an objective, as a *flood-light* valuation.

With these terms at our disposal we may now turn to the task of exhibiting the varying forms assumed by the eudemonic judgment in consequence of the operation of the forces just enumerated, and of determining which, if any, may properly be called "incorrect" or invalid, and which valid.*

## The Influence of Egoistic Interests upon Eudemonic Judgments

Our explorations may begin with the study of the influences of egoism upon the eudemonic judgment. Everyone knows how continuously and how subtly personal interests serve to warp the judgment in matters which concern self, where we suppose ourselves to be taking a purely impersonal standpoint. Thus a business man of large capital drives out of the market and totally destroys a number of smaller competitors by threatening to ruin them if they do not surrender unconditionally and turn over their plants to him at his own price. He sees nothing oppressive or otherwise wrong in this operation; he regards it as "merely business." But in the hour of his victory he comes into conflict with an organization possessed of still larger capital which subjects him to precisely the same treatment. Then he calls high Heaven to witness the inhumanity and injustice with which he has been treated. His rivals are a set of cutthroats and thieves, who have virtually stolen his property and who ought to be behind the bars of a penitentiary.

This type of inconsistency, I need hardly say, is far from being a specialty of business men, but may be found in every department of life.

*See Notes, VIII, "The Abuse of Names in Reasoning," p. 500.

"'The monster,' whispers Voltaire to Madame Denis [referring to his host, Frederick the Great, of Prussia], 'he opens all our letters in the post'—Voltaire, whose light-handedness with other people's correspondence was only too notorious. 'The monkey,' mutters Frederick, 'he shows my private letters to his friends'—Frederick, who had thought nothing of betraying Voltaire's letters to the Bishop of Mirepoix. 'How happy I should be here,' exclaims the callous old poet, 'but for one thing—his majesty is utterly heartless!' And meanwhile Frederick, who had never let a farthing escape from his close fist without some very good reason, was busy concocting an epigram upon the avarice of Voltaire."[2]

The influence of egoistic considerations in warping the judgment is not confined to those cases where the egoistic interests of the judge are actually involved. It insinuates itself into situations where there is no personal interest whatever at stake, and where we might suppose there would be no opportunity for it to serve as a disturbing factor. Called upon to decide between two rival claims, the mind tends spontaneously and instantly, by a kind of dramatic impulse, to put itself in the position of one party or the other; and while it supposes itself to be determining which set of interests, objectively considered, has the better claim, it is in fact asking: If I were in the place of one of the parties concerned, what should I want? Thus when a newspaper announced that the daughter of an absconding defaulter had declared her willingness to help the police find her father, a certain woman told a friend she thought such an offer wrong. "At least," she added, "I should not want my daughter to treat me in that way."

In this illustration the judge thinks of himself as the patient.[3] Ordinarily, however, he puts himself in the place of the chief actor in the drama. That is to say, the abstract question of right and wrong usually takes the practical form: What would it be my duty to do under the circumstances? In this case we tend to look at the situation primarily from the point of view of the agent's interests, to the greater or less disregard of the interests of the patient. In consequence the latter have little chance of receiving consideration, for we can imagine what we ourselves

[2] Lytton Strachey, *Books and Characters*, p. 175. Shakespeare's historical plays almost harp on this theme.

[3] For the meaning of this term as here used, see Chapter I, page 17.

have to gain or lose by the transaction far more vividly than we can the effects upon him. In consequence the average judgment is apt to be lenient to the agent, and correspondingly chilly towards the claims of the other party.

The chief exception to the above principle is very significant. It is that of murder. Thus a class of university students are asked every year the following question.

> Miss Wagner, an opera singer, made an exclusive contract to sing for a certain period for an opera manager, Mr. Lumley. Later, another manager, Mr. Gye, induced her to break her contract with his rival and to appear in his own company. Miss Wagner had no justification for her action, and her only motive was the desire to make more money. Was Mr. Gye justified, on his part, in offering her the inducement which led her to go back on her agreement?

About fifty per cent answer this question in the affirmative. They think the responsibility for the wrong rests solely upon the shoulders of Miss Wagner. Then another question is asked, involving precisely the same principle:

> Was Lieutenant Becker justified in offering money to the New York gunmen in order to induce them to kill the gambler Rosenthal?

All answer "No." The principal reason for this difference in attitude seems to be that whereas no one of them can imagine himself as really engaged in planning a murder, all or most can very easily picture themselves trying to get a prize away from a business competitor.

### If a Moral Judgment Is to Be Valid It Must Be Free from the Influence of Purely Egoistic Considerations

What will the layman do when he discovers that his judgment has been the plaything of his personal interests? David, King of Israel, having become enamored of Bathsheba and wishing to possess her himself although she was the wife of another man, ordered her husband to be placed in a post of danger in an approaching battle, and then, when the enemy had done their work, added the widow to his already large collection of wives. This he did without the faintest beginnings of a qualm of conscience. Then the prophet Nathan came to him and told him the parable of the rich man who seized a poor man's one ewe lamb. This tale aroused the indignation of the king to the highest pitch,

whereupon the prophet turned upon him with the words: "Thou art the man." Instantly the scales fell from his eyes, and in contrition of spirit he confessed that he had sinned.[4]

This is what men actually do when they succeed in seeing such judgments as these in their true light. Why they do so was explained in the preceding Chapter. Right, as we there learned, means a rule binding equally upon all who are in the same situation. From this it follows that no judgment can be correct, or valid, which turns upon the accidental relation of the action to my personal interests. For if the action is right here and now it must be equally right where I and my personal interests are absent, whether in China or Peru.

In thus repudiating the bias produced by egoistic interests the lay conscience is in reality, even though not explicitly aware of the fact, repudiating a subjective in favor of the objective valuation.

### Other Instances of the Influence of the Imagination

The power of egoism to influence the judgment is due fundamentally and chiefly, as we have seen, to the workings of the imagination,[5] so that the warping of the judgment by egoism is a case of its warping by the imagination. This settles at once the status of a large number of judgments. I may condemn an employer for dismissing an incompetent or lazy employee solely because I happen to be acquainted with the latter and can realize his plight, while the former is a stranger, and neither his troubles nor those of his customers who are disserved form any definite picture in my mind. I may condemn an automobile driver for fast driving because I happened to see the accident, whereas if I had not been an eye-witness of a horrible death scene but had been made acquainted with the facts through the testimony of others I should have contended that the driver was well within his rights in driving as he did. Again my decision with regard to the obligation to obey a general rule may turn upon the presence or absence of certain experiences in my past life and the power they have preserved to impress the imagination. For in-

[4] II Samuel XII, 1-14.

[5] Chapter V, page 80, above; *cf.* Chapter III, page 40 ff.

stance, in the course of the investigation into the moral judgments of university students frequently referred to in earlier chapters, one young man declared it wrong for a man to steal bread in order to save from starvation a helpless widow and her children, whereas he thought it entirely permissible for a doctor to give an overdose of morphine to release from torture a man hopelessly sick with cancer. When inquiry was made into the reason for this somewhat peculiar combination, it appeared that the respondent was able to imagine with great vividness the situation of the patient racked and torn with the agony of cancer; whereas the sufferings of the family dying of starvation did not form any definite picture in his mind. This difference in sensitiveness in the two cases seems, in its turn, to have been due to the presence of illness and the absence of the pangs of starvation in his own past life.

The imagination thus has an enormous power to twist our judgments this way and that in its fitful play upon our estimation of values. The result is the tendency to regard what in Chapter III was called the "more striking good" as having the superior claim. But when the nature of the issue is clearly realized the lay conscience rejects those judgments which are due merely to the fact that the imagination of the judge chances to respond more vigorously to the interests of one party than the other. In other words, it repudiates the valuations which have their source in the one-sided workings of the imagination in favor of a judgment based upon an objective valuation.

### The Influence of Love, of "Consciousness of Kind," and of Community of Blood

The subtle workings of the imagination in attracting our sympathy to one side of the scene are matched by the similar operation of what we may loosely call our likes and dislikes for the persons concerned, although a close analysis would usually show the imagination also operating as a factor in the situation.

The influence of love, in the sense of "tender emotion," of the feeling of congeniality or "consciousness of kind," and of the belief in blood relationship, upon our interests in the good of the persons concerned, has already been described (Chapter V, page

81 and following). Especially when combined, these elements often sweep every contending consideration out of their path and produce results in the way of moral judgments which might well astound an observer from Mars. When my son sets upon my neighbor's son and gives him a black eye, I am likely to regard the incident as merely the natural ebullition of healthy animal spirits; but when his son performs precisely the same operation upon my son—it becomes a very different matter indeed.

Our moral judgments are constantly being determined by these relationships even where we suppose ourselves most impersonal. A typical illustration follows. Some years ago, in the course of an investigation, the following problem, among others, was given to a number of University of Wisconsin undergraduates.

A man returning from his day's work was crossing a railroad track near his home when he discovered that a switch had been left open by a careless switchman. This he saw at once would mean death or injury to the several hundred people in a rapidly approaching train. At the same moment he saw his only child playing upon the track in front of the engine. He had time only to turn the switch and save the train or else to save the child. Which was it his duty to do?*

In addition to this, the problem was presented which John Howard had to face when called to choose between the moral welfare of his son and the continuance of his work in prison reform. In order that the real issue might be understood it was expressly stated that this work was primarily one of moral reformation. Howard's problem was also presented in a modified form, as follows:

This same alternative, the reformation of a number of prisoners and the reformation of a dissipated son whose rescue imperatively demanded removal to another place, was presented to a certain prison official. His opportunities for doing good were insignificant compared with Howard's. He might reasonably expect, if he remained in his present position during the ensuing ten years, to restore to a life of honorable citizenship perhaps twenty or thirty of the unfortunates committed to his care. The chances, on the other hand, of the appointment of a successor who would take an interest in carrying out his work were very slight. What ought he to do?

**Cf.* above, Chapter III, page 44.

One of the respondents answered the two last questions: "Continue the work for the prisoners;" whereas he held most emphatically that the man at the switch ought to save the child rather than the train; and he maintained this position even when the man at the switch was supposed to be the switchman himself, to whose negligence the peril of the train was directly due. When asked for the grounds for these divergent answers he replied that the idea of the helpless little child sitting, all unconscious of its fate, upon the track in front of the oncoming engine, had appealed so strongly to his sympathies that it overcame every consideration which might oppose it. And the strength of this appeal was due to the fact that he had a little brother of his own to whom he was devotedly attached and whom he pictured in this position. When asked what would have been his attitude if his imagination had placed his little brother in the train, he said he didn't think of that.

This little experiment seems to me to reveal unmistakably the origin of those judgments which demand choice of family and other similar interests as such above all other considerations, and demand it, seemingly, as an ultimate deliverance of the moral consciousness. A moral problem is put before us in a purely objective way, involving the claims of family as compared with the claims of other persons outside of this circle. If we happen to have a child or a little brother of our own we immediately thrust him upon the stage. If not, we tend to place there an imaginary one. Furthermore, we place him at the center of dramatic interest; or, what will ordinarily come to the same thing, we place ourselves as father or big brother at the point of view of the man who is called upon to act. In consequence the beam immediately tips in favor of the father's interest, and we judge the claims which most powerfully appeal to him to be superior to those of all the other parties concerned. In the concrete, we hold that a person ought to save his little brother, or his child, rather than a train-load of people. All the while we suppose ourselves to be determining a question of right and wrong, whereas what we are really doing is thinking how we should most want to act if we found our own child sitting on the track in front of the onrushing train.

In making this statement we have condemned all judgments of this class, just as we have previously condemned those based on our egoistic interests, and for precisely the same reason. If a moral judgment is to be valid it must be the outcome of an impersonal point of view—a point of view apart from our personal relations to any of the parties concerned. But in the instances before us the judgment turns on the fact that it is my child who is being pummeled, or my friend or my relative who is the sufferer; or else I am imagining my child, my friend, or my relative as one of the parties making up the situation.

Once more, as between a judgment based upon a subjective and one based upon an objective valuation the lay conscience rejects the former and accepts the latter as soon as the source of the former is clearly recognized.

In Chapter III we made the acquaintance of a standard or principle to which many popular judgments conform. This principle was formulated thus: Where interests conflict, the interests of him who is "nearer" to the agent have the superior claim. The analysis contained in the preceding sections shows, I believe, that this is not a valid standard of moral judgment.

### All Judgments Based upon a Subjective Valuation Are Invalid

The preceding survey has shown that certain of our everyday moral judgments may properly be called invalid because they depend upon our accidental relations to the situation under consideration. But it points to something far more fundamental and important. This is the fact that if a judgment of right or wrong is to be valid it must be independent entirely of how we chance to feel about the action because of interest or lack of interest on our part in one or another of the parties concerned. Consider some of the judgments that have just been brought before us. (1) It is innocent for me to use my financial power to ruin another man's business, but wrong for a still more powerful business organization to do the same thing to me. (2) It is innocent to bring about a breach of contract by offering money to a third party as an inducement, but wrong to bring about death in precisely the same way. (3) It is innocent for my son to blacken

your son's eyes, but very wrong for your son to blacken my son's eyes. (4) It is the duty of the passing pedestrian and even of the negligent switchman to save the life of his own child rather than the lives of a train-load of passengers; but it is the duty of the prison warden to sacrifice his son to the welfare of a small number of prisoners. The first of each of these four pairs of judgments, as we have seen, is invalid. What then is the common characteristic which makes them such? Each is a case of subjective valuation due to the pressure of some special stimulant upon benevolence. The cause of the pressure in our illustrations was the relation of the judge to one of the parties concerned. But the essential nature of the flaw in the judgment is the same, whatever the cause of this flaw may happen to be. Eudemonic judgments are invalid, therefore, in so far as benevolence is influenced in favor of one party to the disadvantage of the other by our imagination, or our likings, regardless of what the cause may be that sets this influence in motion. The valid judgment, obtained by the elimination of these influences, is thus that which is based upon an objective valuation of the interests concerned.

### The Influence of Admiration and Kindred Stimulants

This conclusion enables us to deal at once with the remaining stimulants of benevolence. The most important of these are admiration, approbation, and its normal attendant, the impersonal form of gratitude which I have called thankfulness. In enlisting our special sympathy in behalf of their object they act upon benevolence precisely as do love and its kindred feelings. They kindle our interest in the welfare of the admired person and make us judge: The good of those I admire ought to be preferred to the good of those I do not admire; and the good of the more admired ought to be preferred to the good of the less admired. They thus conflict with an objective valuation of the situation in question and are accordingly, as we have just seen, invalid.

An examination of the main trend of the actual moral judgments of the race will verify abundantly the truth of this conclusion. The only place where the majority of its members make anything approaching a firm stand in behalf of the call of admiration and its kindred forces as against the principle of ob-

jective valuation is in the field of moral desert; that is to say, where the object of admiration and approbation is character. In the field of intellectual ability and physical strength and skill there is a greater division and a greater uncertainty of opinion.[7] In such matters as personal beauty, refinement of taste, agreeableness of disposition, including freedom from certain attitudes such as gloom or conceit, pleasing manners, style in dress, ability to drink long and deep without falling under the table,[8] and much else, the determination of what is right as between man and man in accordance with the demands of admiration becomes far more sporadic and also far less insistent. Nowhere, in fact, from the lowest stages of primitive life with which we are acquainted up to the highest reaches which civilization has as yet attained, do we find any real willingness to carry through the principle that claims should vary according to admiration, with anything like consistency. As evidence of where we stand today, consider the outcry that would have been raised far and wide if one of the state industrial commissions that were trying a few years ago to determine what constitutes a fair wage for working girls had been caught laying down the principle that the pretty girls, or the stylish girls, or the girls that do not chew gum, ought to receive a minimum of twenty dollars per week, while the rest might properly receive whatever wages their employers chose to give them.

The preceding discussion, if sound, justifies the following statement: The proposition that the good of the more excellent has, as such, a superior claim to that of the less excellent (Chapter III, page 49, above) can not be maintained.

### The Causes of Subjective Valuation

The causes of subjective valuation, I have asserted (above, page 116), are reducible to two. One of these is the one-sided working of the stimulants of benevolence. As it will be convenient to have a name for it, I shall call it *favoritism*. The other cause is *indifference*—indifference, of course, to the welfare of some or all of the parties concerned, as this welfare is affected by the

[7] For illustrations of such judgments see above, Chapter III, page 46 ff.
[8] See Hume, "Essay on National Character," *Works*, Green and Grose Edition, Vol. III, p. 257.

particular action which is being judged. Indifference may be partial or total—using these terms again with reference to the individuals who make up the situation under consideration. Partial indifference leaves room for an interest in some of the parties involved. Total indifference, of course, covers all of them. The first is more likely than not to be due to special depressants of benevolence, though it can sometimes be traced to inborn or acquired "blind spots." The second may have its source in either.

The depressants can be divided into two classes. The first consists of such agencies as habituation, fatigue, and inattention. The second is dislike of some sort for one or the other of the parties who make up the situation. Extreme dislike tends to arouse active malevolence, but its moderate forms need do no more than cool benevolence.

The depressants of benevolence may be temporary in their action, as extreme fatigue, or inattention due to momentary preoccupation with other matters; or they may have permanent effects upon character, as the insensibility to certain forms of feeling in consequence of habituation. An example of the latter is the indifference with which the author of *Seven Years at Eton* finally came to witness the flogging of his schoolmates (above, Chapter V, page 84).

### Partial Indifference

Partial indifference, whether due to the working of special depressants or not, presents no issues which have not been considered in discussing the stimulants of benevolence. The pan of a balance can be lowered either by directly pushing it downwards or by raising its companion. Similarly when the judge has to determne whether A or B has the better claim, the chilling of his feelings towards B will produce the same result as favoritism for A. Thus in deciding whether a business man who has placed an order with a manufacturer is justified in canceling the order on the approach of a serious financial panic, the judge may be moved to excuse him either by a vivid mental picture of the bankruptcy which is staring the business man in the face, or by inability, for whatever reason, to appreciate the situation into which the manufacturer, and in lesser degree the whole body of

manufacturing interests, have thereby been thrust. A depressant may thus produce the same one-sided valuation as a stimulant. When it does, the judgment to which it gives rise is equally invalid.

### Total Indifference

Partial indifference affects the moral judgment by warping the benevolence of the judge, so that the resulting judgment represents a one-sided valuation. Returning to our analogy of the theater, it may be said to produce a spot-light effect by dimming a part of the footlights. But total indifference, in the sense of indifference to the welfare of all the parties making up the given situation, means the dimming of all lights in the house equally, and where indifference is at its maximum, entirely. The result of this lack of interest in the welfare of others is that the infliction of injuries which in more sensitive persons would arouse disapprobation is passed over without condemnation, while acts of self-sacrificing devotion are viewed with unconcern. That is to say, the one and the other are regarded as without moral quality, one way or the other. In extreme cases this is true, as was shown above, Chapter V, page 73, even when the judge himself is the victim of the injury or the beneficiary of the service. The form which such a judgment commonly takes is that the agent is "free," or "has a right" to do as he pleases.

A man of fine spirit may gradually sink into this attitude of mind through the corrupting effects of the social environment, or through the working of internal factors, such as the mental exhaustion consequent upon disease. But not infrequently the explanation of this phenomenon is to be found in native poverty of endowment. When this indifference to the good of others is complete or approximately complete we have the "moral imbecile" (Chapter V, page 71). "When I kill a person I have no more feeling about it than when I drink a glass of wine," said Lacenaire, a youthful Parisian criminal who had committed a score of sordid murders, and had apparently never, from the beginning, felt the slightest tinge of self-reproach.[9] A man of

[9] Lombroso, *L'Uomo Delinquente,* cited from the French translation, Vol. I, p. 356.

this stamp represents a close approximation to the zero-point of benevolence. Between such as he and the highest levels of sensibility and insight there are, of course, innumerable steps. While most primitive peoples exhibit high standards of judgment and conduct in their relations to members of their own tribe, they commonly regard those who are outside of the tribal pale as rightless; and this attitude persists among many civilized nations. "The Greeks have no more duties to the barbarians than to wild beasts," wrote Aristotle. A creed not very different from this was being preached industriously by certain Europeans and Americans before the World War, and the voices of some can still be heard in the land. Many of us regard animals, especially wild animals, as Aristotle did the barbarians, and feel not the slightest condemnation when, for example, they are allowed slowly to starve to death in a trap in order that my lady may have her fur coat. Again most members of the European race, I suppose, recognize more or less completely the obligation to refrain from seriously injuring others, but their conceptions of the duties of positive service are decidedly hazy. Then there is the more or less sporadic appearance of moral "blind spots" in persons perhaps otherwise normally endowed, which usually shows itself as insensibility to the effects of some one kind of action, say fraud in business or niggardliness in charity, accompanied by average reactions at most or all other points. Put these and all the other similar phenomena together and you get some conception of the enormous rôle played by indifference in the field of moral judgment as well as in that of action.

The relation of such facts as these to the problem of objectivity is, I think, clear. Where there exists some impersonal interest in all of the parties that make up the situation, but the judgment favors the interest of less intrinsic importance rather than the greater, the judgment, as we have seen, is invalid. Clearly, then, the judgment will be—if I may use the term—even more invalid when it treats the greater interests not merely as if they were less, but as if their value were zero.*

*See Notes, VIII, "The Propriety of the Term 'Subjective Valuation' as Applied to Judgments Due to Indifference," p. 500.

### Judgments upon Situations Where Conflict of Interests Is Absent

We have been dealing exclusively thus far with judgments upon the rival claims of incompatible interests. Not all eudemonic judgments, however, belong to this type. There are any number of actions where no such conflict takes place. They may become the object of approbation or disapprobation, just like the others. When, for example, a stranger inquires from a passer-by the way to the railroad station the latter may perhaps not subject himself to the slightest inconvenience in responding to the request. If he gives the desired information the observers will ordinarily approve, if they think anything about it one way or the other. Should he be known to refuse out of mere indifference or churlishness they will be likely to condemn him.

I mention these obvious facts merely in the interest of completeness of description. It is clear that judgments upon situations of this sort introduce no new element into the problem we are studying. They are subject to precisely the same variations as the others, and are to be pronounced valid or invalid according to the same criteria. For example, a completely egoistic man might fail to condemn a passer-by who refused, out of sheer indifference, to direct a stranger on his way. His judgment would have no more validity than that of any other egoist who regarded as innocent a murder committed for the sake of getting the victim's money.

### Summary of Our Discussion of the Valid Form of the Eudemonic Judgment

The conclusion which seems to be justified by our survey of the varying forms of the eudemonic judgment is as follows. As we have seen, all these judgments fall into two classes; they are based upon either an objective or a subjective valuation. The former only are valid because they alone conform to the essential feature of the meaning of right. This conclusion gives us as the valid form of the eudemonic judgment the following principle: That volition is right, and that volition only, which aims to bring into existence the greatest amount of good attain-

able under the conditions, including here under good, the most favorable possible balance of good over evil where some evil is unavoidable.*

### The Place of Consistency in Our Moral Judgments

The preceding reasoning rests upon a certain assumption—an assumption at once so familiar, so obvious, and so necessary that it may well have escaped the attention of the reader. It must, however, be brought into the foreground and made an object of special scrutiny, if for no other reason than that its truth is at least implicitly denied by Subjectivism. The assumption is that only those moral judgments can stand the test of reflective criticism which together form a mutually consistent system. In other words, if two moral judgments are inconsistent with each other (or, in common parlance, contradict each other), one or the other of them is declared, and is properly declared, to be incorrect or invalid.

The evidence for the fact that the lay conscience actually does regard inconsistency as involving invalidity stares us in the face at every turn. When King David discovers the inconsistency between his condemnation of the rich man who seized the poor man's one lamb, and the absence in himself of self-condemnation for having Uriah killed and taking his wife, he does not say "What of it? my feelings differ in the two cases, and one judgment is precisely as good as the other." On the contrary he recognizes at once that if the rich man's action is a piece of high-handed violence his own is deserving of no better name. The same principle holds for a person who finds himself regarding as entirely innocent the incitement to break a contract, while considering it the equivalent of murder to incite a person to commit murder. Similarly Mr. Crother's visitor, the forger, felt he had to find a difference between raising checks and stealing umbrellas in order to vindicate his justification of the one and his reprobation of the other.[10]

The lay conscience thus refuses to stand by moral judgments

*See Notes, VIII, "The Possibility of Escaping from a Subjective Valuation," p. 501.

[10] See above, Chapter III, page 47.

which are recognized as being mutually inconsistent. This refusal finds its explanation and therewith its justification in the very nature of morality as the expression of an ideal. A moral ideal or standard is an approved program or plan of action. Consistency is nothing more nor less than persistency in following such a program; or, in other words, it is "the exercise of the same spirit through a variety of measures." A program of action is adopted for some reason. Consistency means that, the situation remaining unchanged, the reason which starts us continues to determine our course throughout.

It is true that all of us are at one time or another inconsistent in our volitions and often consciously so. The impulses of the moment, the superior attractions of the immediate over the more remote future, and the play of a score of other forces often make our actual path the zigzag of a drunken man. A person may be inconsistent, for example, in his fears, abandoning now the pursuit of some good because of the apprehension of some possible danger, and later deliberately taking what he knows to be a far greater risk for an end of perhaps distinctly less value to himself. Again he may sacrifice present ease or comfort for the sake of some permanent good on one day, and on the next day throw away all he has thereby gained and more to avoid a repetition of the same sacrifice. He may keep a promise to his own cost at one time and later break another of essentially the same nature. He may give wisely, unostentatiously, and liberally to the support of charities and other deserving causes and drive his creditors to despair by his delays, his shiftiness, and trickery in paying his debts. As a parent, a teacher, or a judge, he may impose as many different penalties for the same offense, committed under the same conditions, as there are days in the week. These things and others like them we do. But when we "sit down to a cool hour" and reflect upon our life we always resolve to be, or at least wish we had the strength to be, consistent. In a certain small town in which it was generally believed that tubercular infection could be carried by clothing, a rummage sale was once held for the benefit of an antituberculosis campaign. At this sale three suits of clothing, which came from homes where there was tuberculosis in the family, were sold, and knowingly sold, with-

out any attempt at disinfection. What does the reader infer when he is told of this incident? He probably infers what the author does, namely, that the people in charge of this sale were not really interested in the public health. We feel driven to this conclusion because we find it difficult to believe that a case of inconsistency so palpable as this could actually take place in a sane mind. Every voluntary action has a purpose. Inconsistency means a partial or total destruction of this purpose. It is inherent in the nature of the human will that a man should not at the same moment wish to work for the realization of a given end and to work against it, should not attempt to create and destroy the same thing. This is precisely the essence of inconsistency, not only in morals, but also in the pursuit of purely private interests, in the sphere of public policy, of law, or of any other field of human endeavor which is important enough to call for a program or plan of action of any sort. In other words, consistency is an integral feature not merely of a satisfactory *moral* ideal, but of any ideal or program of action whatever. We are, of course, often unaware of our inconsistencies, and when we are half aware of them we frequently try to conceal them from ourselves for many and obvious reasons. Furthermore, we are rather indifferent to inconsistency in trivial matters, such as capitalization and punctuation. But precisely in proportion to our feeling for the importance of the interests at stake do we recoil from tearing down with one hand while we build up with the other. And since the moral ideal is an ideal for all conduct, both the conduct of self and that of others, since it represents the way in which we desire every human being to act, and is thus the most comprehensive and important of all our ideals, inconsistencies here are even less tolerable than they are anywhere else. Thus the will that creates moral standards must, in virtue of its inmost nature as will, demand the removal from these standards of whatever inconsistencies they may be found to contain.[11] *

[11] If an inconsistency is glaring enough it is apt to appeal to us as very much of a joke. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in the City of Mexico once informed the parent society in New York with great pride that they had raised a large sum of money for the prosecution of their beautiful work by means of a bull fight.

* See Notes, VIII, "Consistency in Law," p. 501.

The demand for the elimination of all inconsistencies from our moral judgments means that some principle or plan of action lies, consciously or unconsciously, at the foundation of their requirements. For consistency, as we have seen, is persistency in following a plan of action; it is "the exercise of the same spirit through a variety of measures." Of two inconsistent judgments one is to be rejected. But the maxim gives no information as to which this one is. The clue for the formation of a harmonious moral ideal is supplied by the fact that judgments recognized as due to the influences proceeding from our accidental relations to the situation are universally regarded as invalid. But what is the essential feature of such influences? They are forces which turn benevolence aside from an objective valuation. If so, then the same spirit requires that all judgments that are due to forces which affect benevolence in this way, whatever their origin, be regarded as invalid. A benevolence consistently, or persistently, or in plain English, always determined by the demands of an objective valuation, thus affords the sole standard of valid eudemonic judgments.

The truth of this conclusion, be it observed, is quite independent of the success or failure of any attempt on my part to present a complete picture of the forms of the eudemonic judgment. Even if there are a number of specimens still in hiding the principle will hold for them which we have found reason for applying to those which are in the open: All judgments which are incompatible with an objective valuation are as such invalid. If in the preceding sections of this Chapter I have carried my enumeration of forms farther than was necessary in order to reach this position, I have done so primarily to give the reader some conception of the great variety of phenomena comprehended under the name of the eudemonic ideal, and to enable him to see for himself in the concrete precisely wherein the invalidity of each class consists.

### The Validity of Dysdemonic Judgments

In the light of these findings we may now turn to the last of our problems, that of determining the place in a valid moral code

of the dysdemonic judgment. This demands, as we saw in Chapter II, the infliction of punishment, not as a means to the reformation of the wrong-doer or the protection of society, but as an end in itself. When, therefore, in the present section we discuss the problem of inflicting punishment, we shall mean the visiting of suffering upon the wrong-doer merely for the sake of making him suffer. Whether the agent who inflicts the punishment be the victim, or his family, or friends, or the state, or God, makes no fundamental difference in the principle, and will accordingly be ignored in the treatment of the subject. In our description of the facts in Chapter II we saw that the claims of retributive justice, as it is called, are widely accepted, not merely among what we regard as the lower races and the more primitive states of civilization, but also in our own day and among our own people. What are we to say to such claims?

As we must all have observed at one time or another, when the average layman demands the execution of the law of retaliation, the severity of the punishment demanded is apt to depend upon the intensity of his anger. When very angry (whatever the cause) he calls for heavy punishment, when slightly angry, for light punishment; and not infrequently, when entirely unruffled and composed, for no punishment whatever. Now the preceding studies have shown us that any such casual attitude in matters so vitally affecting the welfare of human beings is absolutely contrary to the spirit of morality. An ideal of conduct which may properly be called a moral ideal can not be the expression of haphazard impulses or passing gusts of emotion, but must form a whole, based upon fixed principles. Not the anger whose ardor and extent are the plaything of a mass of chance external circumstances and internal conditions, but an anger (or if you prefer the term, indignation) having its source in an impersonal attitude towards wrong-doing consistently maintained, can alone serve as the basis of a system of retributive punishment whose claims are entitled to even a moment's consideration.

If this be true it follows that if the inflicting of punishment simply for its own sake is to be regarded as a duty it must be obligatory, not merely in the case of those wrongs which for

whatever reason happen "to get on our nerves," but for all wrongs. This must include not merely sins of commission, but also sins of "forbearance," or refusal to act, and sins of inadvertent omission.[12] It must of course apply to oneself and one's family as well as to others. That is to say, if any wrong-doing ought to be punished, all wrong-doing ought to be punished. If no machinery exists for inflicting the punishment it ought to be created. In its absence a person ought at least to punish himself, as did the little girl who put her left shoe on her right foot and *vice versa* because she had disobeyed her governess; as Boswell did penance for the wrong done by him to his father.[13]

But this is not the end of the matter. The *amount* of punishment may not be left to the whims of the moment. Some fixed standard must be adopted by him who believes in retribution, a standard which will formulate the amount of suffering or loss that ought to be inflicted in retaliation for the injury.[14] How much shall this be? It must be gauged according to the amount of guilt. But this depends partly upon the amount of harm intended (not the amount actually accomplished), partly upon the state of mind of the agent, as whether he was angry, and if so, whether it was the victim that angered him; whether the act was performed in an attack of terror or emotional strain of whatever sort; whether it was done on the "spur of the moment," or was carefully premeditated; whether it was the first offense, or a repetition; and a great deal else besides, How fix the "unit of guilt?" And when this has been discovered—or invented—

[12] See above, Chapter IV, page 54.

[13] For the former incident see above, Chapter II, page 32; for the latter, Boswell's *Life of Johnson,* Hill's Edition, Vol. IV, p. 430.

[14] "The judicial passing of sentence is largely a matter of arbitrariness, mood, and chance. This is an open secret, a painful fact of experience, to everyone who has been engaged in [observing] criminal proceedings. Whether the accused is sentenced to six, or five, or four weeks, or two months imprisonment, is more dependent upon the judge who happens to be sitting, on the subjective views of the judge, on his temperament and his digestion, than upon the gravity of the crime." Wach, *Die Reform der Freiheitsstrafe,* p. 41, quoted by Aschaffenburg, *Crime and Its Repression,* p. 256, with the following comment: "This hard criticism, the truth of which is only too obvious." When a decent man actually sees persons treated in this way, still more when he sees a father using his whims and passing feelings as the measure for the punishment of his child, he feels himself in the presence of one of the most brutal wrongs with which man's inhumanity to man has disgraced the earth.

how much pain is to correspond to a "unit?" [15] When the defenders of retributive punishment have worked out all these problems and have shown that they are ready to accept a system of retributive punishment organized on some consistent principle and with all its implications, then and not till then will they be in a position to come forward and defend it.

But even if they should succeed in meeting these conditions their cause would still be lost. For a moral ideal, as we have seen, must form a consistent system, not merely in its separate parts, but as a whole. The rock on which the retributive ideal shipwrecks is precisely this, that its demands, however formulated, are absolutely inconsistent with those of the eudemonic ideal. The ideal of benevolence commands: Injure no one solely for the sake of injuring him. The ideal of malevolence commands: Injure everyone you want to see suffer. The compromise ideal accepted by the few believers in retributive punishment who have made any serious attempt to think their position through, commands: Injure some of those whom you want to see suffer. The last injunction is in principle just as incompatible or inconsistent with the first as is the second. One of these two ideals therefore must be accepted as a whole and the other abandoned. The choice, in other words, is between a thoroughgoing benevolence and a thoroughgoing malevolence. Which shall it be? We can not give up the eudemonic ideal; it is the source of almost the whole of our moral life, and its roots go down to the uttermost depths of our being. Indeed it is impossible for us to do it without undermining the foundation upon which we build. For the dysdemonic judgment assumes the validity of the eudemonic, in that it demands retaliation only when the person to be punished has acted in violation of eudemonic standards. Consequently it is the dysdemonic ideal that must give way. Its demands, then, must be declared to be everywhere and always without validity.

Again, as in our study of the claims of admiration to dictate concerning human rights and duties, a glance at the history of the race may serve to confirm the truth of our conclusion. As

[15] The famous principle, "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth," proposes to measure the amount of punishment not by guilt but by results.

was pointed out in Chapter V, page 89, malevolence can arise in the mind without any special stimulant whatever; it then takes the form of what is called malicious cruelty. It may be set in motion by the good fortune of other persons, when we call it envy or jealousy. It may be awakened by physical or mental suffering for which its victim was neither directly nor indirectly responsible. It is, however, a significant factor in the actions of the average adult only as a response to anger. But anger can be aroused by stupidity as well as by wrong-doing; it can be aroused by sheer accident for which neither stupidity, nor weakness of will, nor selfishness is to blame. It is almost always influenced tremendously by accident, in the sense that the attempt to harm commonly arouses no strong indignation, and with it no strong demand for retributive punishment, unless it succeeds. It reaches its maximum of intensity when the culprit is caught in the act; but if detection is delayed for a time the emotional excitement will commonly be found to have evaporated. Finally, if anger can not reach the injurer or the wrong-doer, some member of his group or class, as one of his family or clan, his guild, his nation, etc., will serve as a fairly satisfactory substitute.

These facts are written on every page of the history of moral ideas. When they are taken in their entirety, a generalization appears whose essential truth appears to be as little open to doubt. It is perhaps only in the form of malicious cruelty that we can fairly say that malevolence is universally condemned. But the records show that as reflection takes the place of what we commonly term blind impulse, the limits set to the expression of malevolence become narrower and narrower. "Thou shalt not give way to thy malevolent feelings," calls benevolence more and more persistently, insistently, and effectively, with each step forward in the intellectual advancement of the race. What the reflective conscience of today has to do is to make a clean job of it, and once and for all to refuse malevolence any part in the determination of its moral judgments.*

*See Notes, VIII, "The Validity of the Dysdemonic Judgment," p. 502.

## Summary

We may summarize some of the more important results of our study of ethics in the following terms. All moral judgments have their source in desire for and aversion from, in other words, approbation and disapprobation of the aim to harm or help some being or beings capable of experiencing good or evil. All eudemonic judgments express approbation of the aim to serve and disapprobation of the aim to harm; the dysdemonic judgments reverse these terms. Some of the variant forms of the eudemonic judgment are due to different answers to the question: Have the interests of such and such persons, or groups, any moral claim in the sense that to injure them or to fail to serve them would be wrong? The remaining ones are due to different answers to a farther question: Among conflicting interests, all admitted to have some claim, which has the superior claim, or "right of way?" All other variations in moral judgments are due to varying attitudes towards the demands of malevolence. The problem as to whether, among these mutually hostile and incompatible standards, there is any one standard which possesses universal validity, and if so, what it is, can only be solved in the light of the meaning of the term *right*. The adjective *right* applied to volitions means that they are such as we desire should determine the actions of all members of the human race, in the conditions under consideration. Since it has its source in desire (or "the will") the moral ideal must be a harmonious whole, that is, free from inconsistencies. This yields, as our complete and final definition of right, with its implications explicitly stated, the following formula: A volition is entitled to the designation *right* if it is one which, when we have reduced our desires concerning volitions to a consistent system, we desire should govern the actions of all men under the given conditions.

The inconsistencies found in the eudemonic ideal are due to the failure to maintain an objective valuation in determining the right of different persons to a realization of their interests. The ground on which we deny the validity of any but an objective valuation is the fact that judgments which the layman clearly recognizes as based upon the influence proceeding from

his accidental relations to the situation are regarded by him as invalid. The essential feature of these influences is that they are forces which so play upon benevolence as to turn it aside from an objective valuation. If so, the same spirit requires that all judgments due to forces which affect benevolence in this way, whatever their origin, be regarded as invalid. A benevolence consistently (always) determined by the requirements of an objective valuation thus affords the sole standard of valid eudemonic judgments. It will demand an equal concern for equal interests, in whomsoever they may be found. It will accordingly regard as invalid all judgments which pronounce the injury of human beings innocent, or the effort to serve them not worthy of moral approbation. Wherever the welfare of different persons is in conflict it will regard that interest, or set of interests which, objectively viewed, is the more important or valuable to the parties concerned, as having the superior claim. Furthermore, it will condemn all expressions of malevolence of whatever nature as being inconsistent with its spirit; and not merely here and there where they happen to grate on the nerves, but everywhere and always. Thus there exists for each individual, and accordingly for the race as a whole, one and only one valid standard of morals. It may be stated roughly and in purely quantitative terms as follows: That action is right which aims to bring into existence the greatest amount of good for all concerned attainable under the conditions. Here, as elsewhere, "aims" refers to a purpose to realize the maximum of good, not as a means to an ulterior end, such as some personal good of the agent, but as the ultimate end of action.

We may formulate this result in a slightly different fashion. The golden rule seeks to comprehend the whole of morality in the words: Do to others as you would that they should do to you. This is another way of saying: Before deciding how to treat your neighbor put yourself in his place. The use of this maxim must be guarded by the consideration that the interests of self may no more be blurred or ignored than the interests of any other person concerned. Putting these facts together we obtain a partially new formulation of the conclusions of this Chapter. It may be stated in the following words: That conduct is right

which a judge would desire who was able to put himself completely in the position of each and every person making up the situation, and thus to realize to the full precisely what the proposed course of action would mean to all.

Our conclusion, as will be observed, is no requirement set up from without, representing the taste or whim of some would-be autocrat of the kingdom of morals. It is obtained by studying the workings of the mind of the ordinary man when he finds his moral judgments have been determined by the accidents of his personal relationships to the act in question, or when he finds that for whatever reason one of his judgments is inconsistent with (or "contradicts") another. Under these conditions, as we have seen, he repudiates one of his judgments and holds fast to the other. All that we have attempted to do is to penetrate to the ultimate source of these judgments in the human mind, exhibit its demands, show what are the variations from these demands and what are their causes, and thus set forth at the same time the fundamental forms of the invalid judgments and the content of the standard which may properly claim validity.*

*See Notes, VIII, "Moral Imbecility and the Existence of a Universally Valid Code," p. 504; also, *idem*, "Two Conceptions of Objectivity:—A Note for Ethical Rationalists," p. 504.

## Chapter IX

# SOME SUPPLEMENTARY PROBLEMS OF RIGHT

### Is There a Duty to Self?

The standard developed in the preceding Chapter enables us to solve without difficulty a number of problems which have been much discussed by moralists. The first which I shall take up is the existence of a duty to self. The average layman apparently is rather doubtful about the validity of any such conception. However, he who believes that an obligation to another person can ever be abrogated in his own favor, as most people do, has thereby involved himself, whether aware of it or not, in the affirmation of a duty to self. Most persons, for example, believe it right to break a promise, or steal for one's own good, in certain extreme cases. But it is possible to justify such a position only if there is, in such circumstances, a duty to self, which is more imperative than that to the promisee or owner. Our formula for the standard verifies this conclusion. Duty consists in the pursuit of the greatest attainable good, whoever the beneficiary may be. If this good is mine, it becomes my duty to pursue it, just as truly as if it were that of anyone else.

What, then, is the reason why many believe otherwise? This opinion seems to be due chiefly to the application to morals of the legal principle: He who consents to the act of another can not complain of having been wronged (*volenti non fit injuria*). Most persons, of course, have never heard of the maxim itself, to say nothing of having thought out the grounds which give it a certain applicability in the field of law. But, as I have already insisted, we not infrequently come to "feel" the truth of certain propositions whose subject matter lies within the range of our experience, by a process which, while not explicitly reflective, is nevertheless essentially rational in nature. Now it is no uncommon thing, unfortunately, for A to injure B with his own consent, as in selling

him whiskey when he knows it will lead to his ruin. The attitude towards this transaction taken by many laymen is identical with that of many students in ethics towards Mr. Gye's offer to Miss Wagner (see Chapter VIII, page 119): The saloonkeeper is not at all to blame for his part in bringing about the disaster. From this it seems a short step to the position that when A is B, *i.e.*, when B injures himself, he is not morally blameworthy.

### Are There Morally Indifferent Actions?

A second problem has to do with the existence of the morally indifferent. It asks in effect whether the area of duty is co-extensive with that of life? If that action is right which makes not merely for the good of someone—perhaps every significant action does this in one way or another—but for the greatest attainable good of all concerned, it follows that every voluntary action has moral significance, is either positively approvable, or blameworthy. For every such action either is, or is not, inspired by the desire for the greatest good attainable at the time. In the latter event it falls short of what it ought to be, and is in so far worthy of condemnation.

The appearance of the contrary is due to the fact that often several quite different actions will fulfil the same function equally well; just as there may be two or more routes between my house and my office of exactly the same length. Our duty to pay our debts can usually be met in only one way. But the claims of health, recreation, and much else, can ordinarily be satisfied by a number of different modes of conduct. And the range of choice may be still farther enlarged by the fact that even when, to the eye of Omniscience, some alternative may be better than its rivals, we in our half-blind gropings along the pathway of life, may be unable to discover any effective difference between them, and are therefore obliged to treat them as if they are all on the same level.

### Can a Man Do More Than His Duty?

The conclusion just reached prepares us for a third problem: Can a man do more than his duty? Again the answer follows directly from our formula. It is our duty always to aim at the

realization of the greatest good attainable under the conditions, whatever it may be, and to whomsoever it may fall. He who should do "more than his duty" would thus have to sacrifice his own greater good for the less good of others. But if he has a duty to self such sacrifice would be wrong.

As before, we turn from this conclusion to the question: Why has the layman ever thought differently? He has usually regarded men as having a somewhat limited but rather sharply defined range of duties, whether of action or forbearance, in relation to those who are not members of their own family. If unfaithful to these duties they are worthy of blame. If they have performed them, they have done merely what they were bound to do, and are entitled to no particular praise. Whatever goes beyond this, however, is praiseworthy or meritorious; but the omission, on the other hand, ought not to be visited with blame.

These distinctions have their source in the limitations of human benevolence. Among European races of the twentieth century the obligatory includes respect for the life and physical well-being of others, their property, their good name, and the integrity of the family, each in its more obvious forms; it includes furthermore veracity and faithfulness to promises, and positive service to one's family, (less definitely) to one's most intimate friends, to other individuals in dire need or in great danger, and to one's country in time of foreign invasion. If a man has any benevolence whatever, he will wish to see the corresponding acts universal. Farther than this his interest in human beings may not carry him. In particular, he may not wish to sacrifice himself beyond this point; and since we always try our utmost to keep our self-respect, he may fail to condemn in another what he does not wish to practice himself.

The above forms of action and forbearance represent, then, about all the average man really cares to do for his fellows, and thus about all he ordinarily does. Therewith enters a second factor. Our satisfaction in any possession, or situation, is in approximately inverse ratio to the extent to which we take it for granted. Thus it has been said that a man with a toothache thinks everyone with sound teeth happy. This principle is of all

but universal application. We learn to expect a certain average of conduct in human beings. Its presence thereupon arouses no particular satisfaction. Only that which rises above this average is the object of special enthusiasm. On the other hand, the failure of expectation is followed by vigorous dissatisfaction. But the absence of that which we do not expect causes little or no feeling. This is as true of our attitude towards the intellect as towards the character of our fellows. In Goldsmith's "deserted village" the schoolmaster was a prodigy of erudition, whereas in London he would have been nothing in particular.

The distinction which people make between the obligatory and the praiseworthy is thus essentially artificial. It is this because the position of a given amount of attainment on a scale of excellence can not depend upon the number of persons who succeed in reaching it. There have been periods of the world's history, such as the seventh and eighth centuries in western Europe, when society has been all but dissolved into its elements by long-continued orgies of crime. Murder in all its forms, the murder of benefactors or parents, murder aggravated by disloyalty or treachery, murder as the climax of unimaginable torture, other forms of violence in every conceivable variety, fraud, dissimulation, disloyalty, breach of faith, treachery—these horrors, born of a rapacity, licentiousness, revengefulness, or malicious cruelty that knew no restraint, made earth a hell. In such a world a man who has even once been held back from following his will by any moral scruples whatever, is an exceptional person, and appears, by contrast, almost a saint. As for the rest, it is true that we make certain allowances for them, in view of the influence of their environment, just as we do for a child brought up in a gang of thieves.[1] None the less, murder remains murder, oppression remains oppression, treachery remains treachery, whether practised by one or a thousand. That is to say, what kind of conduct you may expect, in the sense of predicting, is one thing; what kind you can approve, is an essentially different thing. As a matter of fact there exists in the field of morals an absolute standard for the measurement of excellence, even though it be never attained by weak human nature. It is

[1] See below, Chapter XIII, page 252.

none other than the one universally valid ideal. According to the extent to which a man's conduct conforms to its demands —making due allowance for the influence of the environment— does it stand high or low on the scale.

### Objective and Subjective Rightness

We have been studying thus far the extent of our duties. We now turn to certain ambiguities of the term *right*.

Suppose a man avenges himself upon one who has injured him or a member of his family, in the belief, however mistaken, that it was his duty to do so; how are we to judge him? I answer in the first place that a man ought to follow his deliberately formed convictions of duty, wherever they may lead. If you think not, what alternative would you suggest? On the other hand, a man may be responsible for his opinions, as for anything else. A physician, for example, may really believe his patient has appendicitis; but the cause of the belief may be that he was too lazy as a medical student to learn to make a difficult diagnosis, or that he has been too lazy since graduation to keep up with the progress of medicine. On the other hand, the explanation may lie in the fact that he is so anxious to have the money which he would get by an operation that he can not "see straight." The ultimate object of the moral judgment, as we have seen, is character.[2] For anything whose source is character, therefore, we are responsible; for whatever does not proceed from it we are not. Now a man's character may have a great deal to do with his judgments of right and wrong, just as with any other opinions. We all tend to see things as we want them to be. We are past masters in the art of throwing dust into our own eyes. This is true of our duties as of everything else. And in the survey we have just completed we have discovered how subtly self-interest may intertwine itself with our judgments, even when we have not the slightest suspicion of its presence. Most of us know some extremely egoistic person who makes preposterous demands upon us in perfect good faith, and feels very badly treated when he is refused. But he would think us impudent self-seekers if we asked him to perform similar services for us. Sir Willoughby

[2] Chapter IV above, page 61.

Patterne, in Meredith's *Egoist,* is an illustration of this kind of a double standard. Indeed we may go farther. All the criminal psychologists agree with Dostoevsky (see above, Chapter V, page 71) that the great majority of precisely the worst criminals feel no remorse for even their most atrocious delinquencies. But remorse involves self-reproach. They have accordingly committed murder and all the rest of the crimes charged up against them quite without self-condemnation. One of the great novels of our generation, Bojer's *The Power of a Lie,* shows with perfect fidelity to truth how a man of ordinary, commonplace morality may, through following one moral misstep by another, gradually sink to essentially the same level as these outcasts, finally reaching a point where he can whitewash his dirty soul after its foulest deeds, to his own complete satisfaction. In all these cases it is obvious that the man's judgments, whether upon others or himself, are determined in the last resort by his own character.

We may conclude that while a man can not be expected to do anything else than follow his own convictions of right (for if, for whatever reason, he thinks someone else better informed and adopts this person's opinions, they thereby become his own) nevertheless he may be condemned for his convictions if and in so far as they are the outcome of laziness, indifference, active selfishness, a malevolent spirit, or whatever other limitations or faults of character may affect one's views of one's duties. In passing judgment upon the judgments of your fellow-men, therefore, in so far as it is possible to distinguish between the contributions of each, render unto the intellect the things that are the intellect's and to character the things that are character's. This injunction undoubtedly is sometimes quite beyond our power to obey, whether from the complexity or the paucity of our data. And the problem is rendered doubly difficult by the fact that men pick up many of their notions of right and wrong from the community about them, and indeed, within certain limits, must and ought to do so. Nevertheless, however difficult the application may be, the principle itself is perfectly simple.

These facts point to an important ambiguity in our moral vocabulary. When I say, It is right to save a train-load of people rather than one's child, I am using the term *right* as in the pre-

ceding Chapter. That is to say, I am applying a principle which —if our reasoning was sound—will be recognized as binding by anyone who has worked out his moral judgments into a consistent system. But when I say, A was right in saving his child, I may mean merely that A's choice was determined by his belief that our children's lives have a higher moral claim upon us than the lives of strangers. This ambiguity may be eliminated by distinguishing between two kinds of rightness. When the volition of the agent is directed to the realization of that set of interests which he believes to have the highest claim, his conduct may be called "subjectively right." When his volition is directed to the realization of that set of interests which actually has the highest claim, his conduct may be called "objectively right." There are some objections to this terminology, but its convenience will serve as its justification.

### Inner and Outer Rightness

There is another ambiguity in the everyday use of the terms *right* and *wrong*. One person might assert: It is right to administer an overdose of morphine to a patient in the last stages of cancer because it would relieve the patient from unnecessary suffering and would do no one else any harm. Another might assert: It is wrong for a physician to give poison under any circumstances whatever, because it would be likely to lead to very serious abuses. Evidently these two opinions differ, not with regard to the moral qualities of the volition, but with regard to the nature of its results.

Here then is a second ambiguity. Right may signify that a *volition* is satisfactory either because it is subjectively or because it is objectively right. It may mean, on the other hand, that the *results* are satisfactory, in the sense that they are such as would be obtained by an objectively right volition which attained what it aimed at. If the conclusions of the last Chapter are sound, a volition is objectively right when it aims at the greatest attainable good of all who will be affected by it. Accordingly an action is right in this latter signification of the term when it actually results in the maximum of good attainable by the agent under the circumstances.

These two kinds of rightness may perhaps be distinguished as inner and outer rightness, respectively. *Inner rightness* consists in the will to produce certain results; *outer rightness* is a name for the results which a man ought to will to produce. If we adopt this terminology, however, we must never forget that outer rightness does not express moral approbation at all, since the morality of an action is determined by its aim, not its consequences. On the other hand, it is intimately related with rightness in the moral sense of the term, for it represents what a man ought to aim at who is aware of the effects which his actions will produce. Thus if a physician believes that to poison a patient suffering with cancer will in the end do more harm than good, it would be wrong, in the moral sense, for him to yield to the pleadings of his patient for relief from his agony.

When we ask, "Did A do right on such and such an occasion?" we are commonly inquiring concerning the nature of his volition. On the other hand, when we ask, "Is it right to act in such and such a way under given conditions?" we are commonly inquiring concerning results; we are asking whether the results would be such that a man who saw them in their entirety would be morally justified in seeking to bring them into existence.

There is nothing remarkable in the fact that the words *right* and *wrong* have more than one meaning. In reality they have half a dozen. We may speak of a road, or a clock, or the answer to a problem, as right or wrong. Wrong comes in the end to be applied to almost anything that we wish should be different, and right to anything with which we feel at peace.

The distinction between inner rightness, or satisfactoriness of volition, and outer rightness, or satisfactoriness of result, accounts for many differences in the use of the term *right* which can not be explained in terms of the facts presented in the preceding Chapter. Some people affirm it is wrong to give an overdose of morphine to a patient in the last stages of cancer; others deny it. Some people affirm it to be wrong to steal bread in order to save life; others deny it. These differences of opinion do not necessarily point to differences in moral standards; they may represent different views of effects. Such differences of opinion are coming and going all the time with the progress of human

knowledge. For example, the science of hygiene has for the past half-century been issuing a series of new commandments: Thou shalt not spit on the sidewalk; Thou shalt not, as hotel owner, offer thy guests a roller towel; Thou shalt not compel the passengers under thy care to drink from a common cup. Very different are our ways, in these matters, from those of our grandparents. But the spirit underlying them is not the creation of our generation; it is that which bids us do nothing to spread disease. The new requirements proceed from new views of effects. And they represent new ideas, not in ethics, but in bacteriology.*

### The Reference to the Field of Action

The effects of an action can only be determined by an analysis of the field in which the action takes place, an analysis through which there is obtained an accurate and comprehensive view of all the relevant facts in their relation to each other. The relevant facts of a situation are those a knowledge of which would make a difference in the judgment. If the ultimately valid standard is that of the greatest attainable good, the facts to be determined are of three kinds: (1) Who will be affected by the proposed action; (2) in what way (favorably or unfavorably); (3) to what extent. This means that all the effects, direct and indirect, must be traced out, and then they must be weighed as accurately as possible. "All," of course, must be understood in relation to the other requirements of life. The effects of even an apparently insignificant act may spread to the ends of the earth, and endure till the last man dies. But there are limits beyond which our mind can not trace them and we are not bound to attempt the impossible. Furthermore some things which are in themselves possible, are not "compossible"; that is to say, they are mutually exclusive. Most decisions must be made within a limited time, and by beings of limited energies. If we put them off until we have obtained certainty we are likely to discover, as did Hamlet, that to refrain from acting is to act.

In analyzing the field of action we must not fail to note that the character of the effects produced by our volitions is deter-

*See Notes, IX, "Judgments of Outer Rightness Consist of an Estimate of Results and a Moral Judgment," p. 505.

mined not merely by the nature of these volitions themselves, but also by the nature of the material upon which they impinge. Strawberries, which nourish some persons, make others sick. Certain chemicals are harmless to the normal stomach, but act as poisons when it is in an acid state. A stone thrown produces different effects according as it hits a granite wall, a sand bank, a mahogany dresser, a pane of glass, or a child's body. Accordingly in considering the effects of our volitions upon human beings we may have to take into account their special needs, interests, temperament, past history, plans for the future, intellectual abilities, and often health and physical vigor.

One or two illustrations will perhaps make the preceding statements a little more concrete. A young woman of ability, after having graduated from the university, remains at home for two years upon the insistent wish of her parents. Then, feeling she can endure a life in the gilded cage of idleness no longer, she raises in her mind the question whether she would not be justified in entering upon a career which she believes would interest her and in which she might expect success, but which would necessitate her leaving the city in which her father and mother live. What ought she to do? Obviously, the question can only be answered after a thorough examination of the situation. What is the health, what is the vigor, what is the age of the parents? Are there other brothers or sisters, married or not, living in the same city? In other words, what are the needs of the parents, physical and social, and what other provisions are available for meeting these needs? Could the young woman find a satisfactory career of some other kind in the same city which would permit of her living at home? Is the financial condition of the parents such that at their death she will have to look after her own economic welfare in case she does not marry? Has she special gifts in some one direction so that the proposed career means exceptional usefulness to the community? These are a few of the questions for which she must find the answer before she can determine what she ought to do.

Here is a problem from the field of business. It is suggested by Justice Holmes, of the United States Supreme Court, in the course of one of his illuminating decisions. In a village in a

remote corner of New England, too small to support more than one store, a young man is considering the establishment of a second store. His success will mean the ruin of the other storekeeper, an old man who has long been engaged in this business. What ought he to do? A proper reply involves an examination of three sets of interests, each conceived in the various possible circumstances by which it may be surrounded. There is first the situation of the older man. Has he a family dependent upon him? If so, could they take care of themselves if they had to? Has he saved enough to live on? Has he children who are able to take care of him? Next we may consider the situation of the younger man. Has he a considerable range of effective choice? Would other fields offer him as favorable an opportunity? Has he a family dependent upon him for support? Finally there are the interests of the community. For example, would its needs be met with appreciably greater effectiveness if the new store were established? These are a few samples of the questions which ought to be asked by a man who knows that his business success in a given place would mean the ruin of a fellow-being less well fitted than he to fight the battle of economic life.

It is true, then, in morals as everywhere else, that "circumstances alter cases." They make no change in the fundamental standards; but they help to determine the direction in which the moral spirit finds its expression. If so, one of the most imperative of duties is the cultivation of intelligence. For this is the instrument which we must employ in determining accurately and completely the consequences of our volitions. We are morally bound to seek to bring into existence the best possible consequences. The failure to do so through avoidable ignorance is thus one of the most culpable of all forms of negligence.

### The Standard of Outer Rightness

The analyses of this Chapter will prepare us to understand the precise nature of the problems of applied ethics. This science deals with the concrete ends at which we ought to aim in a given field of action, and (within certain rather undefined limits) the means by which these ends can be attained. It confines itself, in other words, to problems of outer rightness. According to the view

expounded in this book that conduct is outwardly right which brings into existence the greatest amount of welfare attainable by the agent under the conditions, for all who will be affected by it. When we say "greatest attainable amount," we are assuming that the good and evil experiences of life differ from each other quantitatively, that is to say, that one experience may have more of good in it than another, that it is possible to estimate the relative amounts of goodness and badness, at least roughly, and that evil may be treated as a negative quantity, as a man's liabilities may be reckoned against his assets. On this view "greatest attainable amount of good" means the greatest attainable surplus of good over evil, and must be so interpreted throughout.

It is asserted by many moralists that there are also qualitative differences between goods; that some are higher than others, and, as such, ought to be chosen, regardless of differences in quantity. We shall consider this position in Chapter XX. Whatever our conclusion, our formula remains true as far as it goes. It is not merely true, it is useful. For, on any view of the relation of quality and quantity, a large number of the most important problems involve primarily or solely quantitative considerations. One lie or one breach of trust, for example, may produce a far more complete loss of confidence than another; one piece of carelessness may result in the death of one person; another in the death of a hundred. The expenditure of a certain sum of money may do more good in one place than in another; as where we give or lend money to a brilliant and industrious student from another state, instead of to a lazy and indifferent student who appeals to us merely because he happens to come from the same state or city as we do. An act of the legislature limiting the hours of work for women in stores and factories, or forbidding children under fourteen to work in these establishments, unquestionably produces great hardships in individual instances here and there, but is approved by public opinion on the ground that the resultant good overbalances the evil.

## Chapter X

# ÆSTHETIC JUDGMENTS UPON CONDUCT AND THE INTRINSIC VALUE OF CHARACTER

The preceding account of the moral consciousness has confined itself entirely to one side of the moral life. It has shown men valuing actions as a means to an end; approving, for example, the volition to tell the truth because of the benefits likely to flow from it in the way of a correct view of fact. But right and wrong are not infrequently used in everyday life to characterize a different aspect of conduct. And the phenomena arising from this fact must be understood if we are to deal in thoroughgoing fashion with the great problem of ethics, the nature of the valid standard. We turn, therefore, to the study of a group of judgments which may be called, in the broad sense of the term, æsthetic.

### Beauty of Character

In the attempt to do our duty in that station of life in which we have been placed, to obey with loyalty, to serve with faithfulness, to endure without complaint, to face danger or loss without flinching, certain qualities of character are revealed which enkindle direct admiration apart from any considerations of their usefulness. Our aspirations for the possession of these excellences are voiced by Oliver Wendell Holmes in the well-known lines from *The Chambered Nautilus* beginning,

"Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul."

Our longing for the existence of nobility of character in the world about us, even when we know the actions it creates will be absolutely useless, finds expression in Austin Dobson's sonnet upon Don Quixote.

"Behind thy pasteboard, on thy battered hack,
Thy lean cheek striped with plaster, to and fro,
Thy long spear levelled at the unseen foe,
And doubtful Sancho trudging at thy back,
Thou wert a figure strange enough, good lack,
To make wiseacredom, both high and low,
Rub purblind eyes, and (having watched thee go)
Despatch its Dogberrys upon thy track.
Alas, poor knight! Alas poor soul possest!
Yet would today when Courtesy grows chill
And life's fine loyalties are turned to jest
Some fire of thine might burn within us still!
Ah! would but one might set his lance in rest
And charge in earnest—were it but a mill."

These facts have been affirmed by Kant in words that ought to have made it forever impossible to ignore the admiration and reverence with which we look upon a noble character. "A good will," he writes, "is good not because of what it effects, but simply by virtue of the volition. If with its greatest efforts it should yet accomplish nothing, it would still, like a jewel, shine by its own light as a thing which has its whole value in itself." [1] In his denial of extrinsic value to character, Kant is as one-sided as a writer like Spencer who recognizes only the extrinsic factor. Nevertheless in calling attention to the intrinsic worth of the virtuous will he has performed a service of the greatest importance.

### The Æsthetic Judgment upon Conduct

We admire, then, certain traits of character directly. When we admire anything we also wish that it should exist. Hence arises the demand, which we make both upon ourselves and others, that conduct shall be æsthetically attractive. In persons of exceptional sensitiveness to this aspect of life, conduct which appeals to them as admirable (more particularly heroic conduct) will be demanded even when the benefits accruing from it are insignificant in comparison with the sacrifice which it will involve; indeed, perhaps even when the benefits drop to zero. How such minds will work is shown in the returns from an

[1] *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Sec. 1 (Abbott's translation of Kant's ethical works, p. 10).

investigation made in 1906, for which 100 students at the University of Wisconsin, fifty men and fifty women, supplied the material. They answered a series of casuistry questions, among which was the following:

> At the burning of Moscow in 1812, two guards at the royal palace were, in the confusion, forgotten and the order to relieve them was not given. They therefore remained at their posts and were buried under the burning timbers. Was it their duty to remain when they knew there was nothing to guard? If not strictly their duty, would you think less of them for making their escape?

The great majority of the students answered in the spirit of the poet who wrote:

> "The boy stood on the burning deck
> Whence all with sense had fled."

A few others were inclined to believe that the best interests of discipline required them to remain.

> "Theirs not to reason why
> Theirs but to do and die,"

as one of them quoted for my benefit. But amidst this chorus of utilities could be heard a far different voice:

> "These guards are certainly to be admired for their firmness. Not one out of a hundred would have done the same, and so we would naturally not think it was their duty to remain there. [The writer means that they ought not to be actually *blamed* for leaving.] But even if not strictly their duty, I would think less of them for making their escape. Because the former shows a determination and fixedness of purpose elevating one's moral character not shown in escaping."

Three there were—all women—who took this position. And although the written answers were slightly ambiguous, a searching oral examination proved that the ground of the judgment was in each case admiration of the beautiful. Other questions put orally to these same students disclosed the fact that this attitude was not something accidental or unique, but that it was the determining factor in a rather wide range of decisions.

### Admiration for Power of Will

That quality in character which arouses our direct admiration may be called beauty. Beauty of character, like beauty in the world of nature, has a number of forms. To each of these will correspond a different species of judgment on conduct. The great majority of these judgments, however, represent our response to a single stimulus; that, namely, which was illustrated in the preceding paragraph. It may be called "moral sublimity." Like the sublime in nature, it is due to the exhibition of power, in this case the power of the will. In their higher manifestations the display of strength, courage, fortitude, and untiring patience arouses the emotion of sublimity as unequivocally as does the ocean or the starlit vault of heaven. Our feelings in the presence of such characters are well described by a popular lecturer in the following account of the mother of one of his classmates:

> "There is a strength in that woman that can endure any trial and difficulty without wavering; a devotion that has no thought of self; an ability to make the commonplace, ordinary duties of life seem more ennobling and elevating than works in literature, art, and philosophy. What is the secret of it all I can not say; but there is something in that mother which is great and rare. When I think of her it gives me a sense of awe, like the feelings we have when looking at the stars, or into the mysteries of life through the microscope."

Only in its higher manifestations, to be sure, is the will capable of arousing the emotion of awe. But even in its more commonplace forms strength of will evokes an admiration which seems to differ from the preceding rather in degree than in kind. So that everywhere and always will power is valued not merely because of its utility, but also because of the admiration which it directly evokes. The judgments in which actions are declared to be right because of the beauty of character exhibited in performing them, may be called "æsthetic judgments." [2]

[2] For concrete examples of this kind of beauty see the following characterizations: Herman Grimm on Savonarola, in *Life of Michael Angelo*, Ch. III (Eng. tr., Vol. I, p. 111); John Richard Green on George Washington, in *Short History of the English People*, p. 779; a review of the

## Is Conduct Ever Called Morally Praiseworthy Solely Because of Its Beauty?

It is one thing to admire conduct, it is quite another to pronounce it morally praiseworthy. Everyone admires the courage of the Moscow soldiers, for instance, but only a very small percentage of persons find anything in it worthy of moral approbation. It is easy to explain the attitude of the majority. They say: These soldiers were not attempting to do any good by remaining. If the guards considered themselves bound to remain because they thought it necessary for the maintenance of discipline in the army to obey all orders without reasoning, that would be another matter. But unless they stayed with a view to accomplishing a useful purpose of some kind their action was folly or worse. But how explain the attitude of the three young women who—as was shown by a careful cross-examination—never once thought of the relation of unquestioning obedience to army discipline, and were perfectly aware that the guards knew nothing was left in the palace to protect and that their standing at the palace gate was a matter of mere form?

In the attempt to solve this problem the following supplementary question was given (orally) to these persons. The incident referred to is related by Guyau, in his *Sketch of Morality Independent of Obligation or Sanction.*

A number of workmen in a French village were wheeling limestone in barrows to a lime kiln, into which they were throwing it through an aperture in the roof. In so doing, one of the workmen slipped and fell and was precipitated into the chamber below. There was no possibility

career of Theodore Thomas, founder of the Chicago Orchestra, in the *Dial,* Vol. 38, 1905, pp. 227-230. The beautiful in character is more apt to appeal to us when presented through literature than when we come into contact with it in real life. One reason is suggested by Browning in *Fra Lippo Lippi.*

> "For, don't you mark? we're made so that we love
> First when we see them painted things we have passed
> Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see."

Another reason, partly identical with the preceding, is that we often live too near the real man to see him as a whole. An insect crawling over a statue would never become aware of its beauty though endowed with the most exquisite æsthetic perceptions. So it is with us, except as we deliberately stand back and bring our friend's character in its completeness before the inner eye.

of rescuing him, even if life was not extinguished instantly. The interior glowed with a heat of many hundred degrees; the walls and ceiling were curved like those of a bee-hive. Nevertheless the five workmen who followed him threw themselves successively into the kiln after their fellow-laborer and perished as he did. Do you think better of them morally for so doing?

Two of the three students at once replied that such action was wrong; it was a mere throwing away of one's life. But the third, the beauty-loving daughter of a beauty-loving race, nourished from childhood upon stories from Plutarch and Rollin, still responded as before that this was what the highest type of man must do. And they must do it (in reply to another question) even if they had families dependent upon them for support. "What would be their motive?" I asked. "That is impossible to answer," was the reply; "something mysterious, indefinable." "Suppose they did it in order to show their courage?" "Then it would be revolting." "You understand," I continued, "that they knew perfectly well there was absolutely no hope of their rescuing their comrades?" "Yes," she replied, "but I think such things are not altogether vain. I have had several experiences where in reading of such things they have seemed to reveal and prove the existence of elements in man higher than mere flesh, divinity in man. They seem a kind of evidence for immortality and the existence of God." From this answer we may infer, I think, that for this young woman the gap between æsthetic admiration and moral approbation was bridged by the consideration, more or less confusedly lodged in her mind, that this act of blind heroism was of use, indeed of the highest use, after all. If this is true of her, the most thoroughgoing of the three respondents in devotion to an æsthetic ideal of life, it probably holds, in some fashion, for the other two also; although I am unable to present any direct evidence for the hypothesis.

This conclusion is strengthened by the outcome of a second investigation, made by Miss Grace Pugh, a graduate student in the University of Wisconsin, several years later. She asked (among others) the question about the Moscow guards, and obtained precisely the same results as were obtained in the earlier investigation. Of fifty male undergraduates none found

anything morally praiseworthy in the refusal to escape where no good of any kind could result from remaining; of fifty women, forty-seven took the same position. The other three were then asked, orally, certain supplementary questions of which the following proved to be the crucial one.

A passenger on one of the great Atlantic liners accidentally falls overboard. There is, and can be supposed to be no hope of saving him. Under no conceivable circumstance will an 'ocean greyhound' stop to rescue a drowning man. The time is winter, the sea is running furiously, and the man in the water can not possibly sustain himself for more than a few minutes. There is therefore no help for him from any source whatever. A fellow-passenger who has seen the accident and who fully realizes that a rescue is absolutely impossible, leaps into the sea after the drowning man. What is to be thought of the moral character of this act?

Two of the three respondents at once declared it morally unnecessary. The third replied that if the second man could swim, his action would be morally praiseworthy; otherwise not. A man swimming till he sank from exhaustion would at all events look from the steamer deck as if he were trying to perform a service. For this respondent, accordingly, all that seems to have been needed to turn an æsthetic into a moral judgment was some suggestion or semblance of utility in the admired action, however superficial.

The problem set by the æsthetic judgment upon conduct, as we remember, is as follows: Most persons admire such traits as will power, but only a very small minority find anything morally praiseworthy in those exhibitions of it which are known by the agent to be absolutely useless. However this minority exists. How explain its attitude? My suggestion is that in these exceptional cases the satisfaction at some actual though not intended usefulness (as in the first example), or at some semblance of usefulness (as in the second), fuses with a very intense admiration for beauty of character, and, aided perhaps by the will to believe that what is greatly admired may be properly demanded, leads to the characterization of the action as praiseworthy in the moral sense. I must add that the influence of æsthetic considerations in producing moral judgments is most widespread where the factor of utility does not stand at zero, as in the above

illustrations, but where it is so small in comparison with the sacrifices required of the agent that if it were not for the glamour thrown over it by admiration the deed could never command approval. Such æsthetic-utilitarian judgments are fairly common. They are part of the stock in trade of novels of adventure.[3]

### Æsthetic Judgments, as Such, Are Not Moral Judgments

Whatever may be thought of the preceding explanation, it is certain that æsthetic judgments are not moral judgments in the proper sense of the word. The object of the moral judgment is the attempt to realize a given end. But the object of æsthetic admiration is not to be found in the nature of the adopted end, but in a certain quality exhibited in the pursuit of an end; a quality, moreover, which can be found alike in the noblest and in the most atrocious of purposes, in the career of a Washington and the career of a Napoleon.[4] In other words, courage, fortitude, self-control, perseverance, and similar traits are not in themselves moral qualities, but are rather qualities which acquire moral value according to the nature of the ends in the pursuit of which they are exhibited.

There is nothing novel in the idea of a judgment upon conduct which is not a moral judgment. On the contrary, there are a considerable number of such judgments, with most of which we have been familiar all our lives. Samuel Johnson, in characteristic fashion, illustrates one of them—the demand for dignity—as follows:

"Johnson's profound respect for the hierarchy made him expect from bishops the highest degree of decorum; he was offended even at their going to taverns. 'A bishop' (said he) 'has nothing to do at a tippling house. It is not indeed immoral in him to go to a tavern; neither would it be immoral in him to whip a top in Grosvenor Square. But if he did, I hope the boys would fall upon him and apply the whip to *him*. There are gradations in conduct; there is morality—decency—propriety.'"[5]

[3] For another exploration of the field of æsthetic judgments, the author's "Objective Study of Some Moral Judgments," in *American Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 9, p. 221 ff. may be consulted.

[4] "Beautiful as a tempest, as an abyss," writes Renan of the career of Cæsar Borgia (quoted in Sidgwick, *Methods of Ethics*, seventh Edition, p. 108).

[5] Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, Hill Edition, Vol. IV, p. 87.

### Antipathetic Judgments

In the preceding paragraphs I have been describing certain characteristics of conduct which make it attractive, apart from its usefulness. There are also forms of conduct which arouse direct feelings of repulsion apart from any thought of the harm that may result from them; and these actions in consequence are frequently called wrong. Some instances of such feelings are quite beyond our comprehension, presumably because we are not acquainted with all the facts. Lecky writes:

"If we were to measure the criminality of different customs by the vehemence of the denunciations [of the early Church Fathers] we might almost conclude that the most atrocious offense of their day was the custom of wearing false hair, or dyeing natural hair. Clement of Alexandria questioned whether the validity of certain ecclesiastical ceremonies might not be affected by wigs; for, he asked, when the priest is placing his hand on the head of the person who kneels before him, if that hand is resting upon false hair, who is it he is really blessing? Tertullian shuddered at the thought that Christians might have upon their heads the hair of those who were in hell, and he found in the tiers of false hair that were in use a distinct rebellion against the assertion that no one can add to his stature, and, in the custom of dyeing the hair, a contravention of the declaration that man can not make one hair white or black. Centuries rolled away. The Roman Empire tottered to its fall, and floods of vice and sorrow overspread the world; but still the denunciations of the Fathers were unabated. St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, and St. Gregory Nazianzen continued with uncompromising vehemence the war against false hair, which Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria had begun."[6]

It should be said that the feeling of repulsion against this practice appears to have had its source in the fact that the hair was ordinarily obtained from a dead body. But it must be observed that we have to account not merely for the immediate feeling, but also for the condemnation of those who offended this feeling as guilty of a horrible violation of the moral law.

But however remote from our experience certain of these

[6] *History of European Morals*, 3rd Edition, Vol. II, p. 149.

antipathies, as we shall call them, may appear to be, others are almost universal in their distribution, some of them being found alike among the uncivilized and civilized races of man. The most important varieties are two. The first is disgust at certain kinds of sensual indulgence. Of these the leading forms are those directed towards eating and sexual relations. The former is at the basis of most of such reprobation as exists against gluttony, and in civilized society has had much to do with the building up of one branch of *la petite morale,* our code of table manners. The latter is discussed by Professor James in his *Principles of Psychology,* Vol. II, pages 437-439, to whose account I have nothing to add. The most widely distributed and important manifestation of this feeling is the horror of incest. The second of the two principal varieties of antipathetic emotion is contempt for weakness of will, in its many forms; first of all, for cowardice in the face of death or wounds; then for lack of fortitude under unescapable pain; then for inability to control anger and the solicitations of sense and of ease. As intelligence advances the same reprobation is visited upon lack of patience, of perseverance, of moral courage (willingness to face social obloquy), and of moral fortitude (external calmness under other forms of suffering than physical pain). Contempt, it must be observed, is a positive emotion and is by no means equivalent to disappointed expectation at the failure to exhibit will power.

Disgust and contempt, in themselves, are not due to a perception of the harmfulness of the conduct which awakens them. For in the case of many harmful actions they do not arise at all, as in attacks upon life or property provided no suggestion of cowardice enters, in breach of contract, and indeed in most other wrongful acts. Nor could the influence of utilitarian considerations explain why incest and cowardice, respectively, arouse feelings so different from each other as disgust and contempt.

### Is Conduct Ever Called Wrong Solely Because of Its Immediate Repulsiveness?

It is one thing, as we have noted, to feel a direct antipathy for a certain action, it is quite a different thing to call it wrong. Whether conduct is ever called wrong solely because of these

antipathies is a difficult matter to decide. In the case of contempt we must probably answer, "No." The best single piece of evidence for this position is our attitude towards the absence of certain forms of physical courage in women. These, broadly speaking, are not needed by them; their absence, therefore, ordinarily does no particular harm. At all events they were not needed in the "sheltered life" which, for the most part, women have hitherto lived in civilized society. Put by the side of this the fact that usually women are not severely condemned for want of physical courage. It is almost impossible to suppose that these two facts have no connection. The conclusion which, it seems to me, may be drawn from this parallelism is further confirmed by the partial disappearance of this difference in attitude in recent years, which has accompanied the emergence of women from the protective confines of the "sheltered life." This statement does not contradict the assertions of the previous paragraph. The contention here is not that contempt is due to a perception of the harmfulness of certain actions, but that it will not lead to the stigmatizing of conduct as wrong except as there is, at least in the background of the mind, a belief that the action (or forbearance) in question is actually harmful—whether the purpose to harm was present in the mind of the actor or not. In other words, my view of the relation of contempt and the use of *wrong* is identical with my view of the relation of admiration and the use of *right*. Such a parallelism, it may be remarked, is what, on the whole, might be expected in advance.

At bottom, I believe this same relationship will be found to obtain between disgust and moral condemnation, though the facts in this case are somewhat more obscure. A person with a lively imagination can think of a hundred disgusting things a man could do at a dinner table. We might say he had no right to do them in our presence because they would nauseate us. But if he was quite ignorant of the effect upon our feelings, or was alone (and was known by us to do them) we should doubtless say he was a disgusting brute, that he was no gentleman, and should probably cut him dead; but we should never think of saying he had done wrong. More than that, where the disgusting is useful, as in some of the work of the nurse or the doctor, we

think that the necessity they are under of subjecting themselves to these experiences throws a certain halo of heroism about their calling.

When, therefore, the disgusting is called wrong the reason is, I believe, that at least in the back of the mind there is always the idea, however vaguely formulated, that the practice is harmful (not necessarily that the agent intends harm). What does the ordinary man know of the harmfulness of incest, it will be asked, when even the experts differ as to the effects of the marriage of near kin? I reply, he presumably knows and thinks nothing of the effects of such marriages upon the offspring, which is the subject on which the experts differ. But there are other equally important effects which are entirely within the range of his vision. If brothers and sisters were accustomed to look upon each other as possible husband and wife the purity of family life would be distinctly endangered. If daughters grew up to be the rivals of their mothers, genuine family life would be at an end. For a family whose members had to be chaperoned would not be, properly speaking, a family. Thus the direct repulsiveness of incest is a powerful protector of the most precious thing in the world, the freedom and intimacy of the home. And if the ordinary layman does not see these consequences he is none the less capable of "feeling" them (Chapter II, page 28).

### Antipathetic Judgments, as Such, Are Not Moral Judgments

But whatever reason may be assigned for the fact that our antipathies are often a factor in our stigmatization of conduct as wrong, it is clear that in so far as judgments are based solely on these feelings they are, like the æsthetic judgments upon conduct, pseudo-moral rather than moral. The reason for this assertion is that they are not judgments upon the direction of the person's volitions. They express rather our feelings upon certain by-products which may appear in the course of carrying out our volitions. This becomes clear when we ask ourselves the question whether the disgusting as such can be regarded as wrong. The answer is that, some of the most disgusting actions, as we have already noted, such as those which are not infrequently

required of the doctor or the nurse, take on a character akin to heroism precisely because they are so repellent.

### The Extrinsic and the Intrinsic Value of Character

The material which has come before us in this Chapter will, I believe, help to settle a controversy which has long raged in ethics. It concerns the problem whether the value of character (and conduct) is extrinsic or intrinsic. A thing has an extrinsic value in so far as it is valued for its utility, or in other words, as a means to an end. An illustration is a current coin. An object has an intrinsic value, on the other hand, when it is valuable for its own sake, as an end in itself. A beautiful Greek coin will serve as an example. It goes without saying that an object may have both values at the same time.

In ethics one school of writers, of whom Herbert Spencer may be taken as an example, have recognized solely the extrinsic value of character. According to them character is valued, like a bank note, only for its effects upon the welfare of the person or persons within the range of its influence. Others, like Kant, have insisted solely upon the admiration and reverence with which we look upon the noble character and have found here the one source of its value.

In the light of our survey of the moral life it is easy to see that both schools are right in what they assert, wrong in what they tacitly or explicitly deny. Character has both an extrinsic and an intrinsic value. It is certainly valued for its fruits; and this valuation, as chapter after chapter of this book has shown, determines the content of our moral standards, and in fact lies at the very foundation of our moral judgments. It is with equal certainty valued for its own sake. Suppose it were true that what we sometimes call the material interests of the various members of society were so perfectly adjusted to each other that every individual in best serving himself served equally well all others also. We should still remain unsatisfied, though living in perfect peace, security, and comfort, if all these services were the product merely of self-regard. For we want a world in which there is such a thing as devotion, loyalty, self-forgetfulness, a direct interest in others, a direct interest *in us*, and the capacity for

self-sacrifice. Shakespeare, who certainly knew what was in the heart of man, bears witness to this fact in immortal lines:

> "Tired with all these, for restful death I cry.
> As to behold desert a beggar born,
> And needy nothing trimm'd in jollity,
> And purest faith unhappily forsworn,
> And gilded honor shamefully misplac'd,
> And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,
> And right perfection wrongfully disgrac'd,
> And strength by limping sway disabled,
> And art made tongue-tied by authority,
> And folly—doctor-like—controlling skill,
> And simple truth miscall'd simplicity,
> And captive good attending captain ill."

These are not the words of a man who is afraid he will be injured, rather of one who is sick at heart at the spectacle of the baseness of human nature and the ugliness of human life. The tone of the sonnet, as more than one critic has noticed, strikes the keynote of Hamlet. For Hamlet's melancholy is not due primarily to the death of his father but to the destruction of his faith in humanity through the shameless disloyalty of his mother. The world, for him,

> "is an unweeded garden,
> Things rank and gross in nature
> Possess it merely."

### The Two Forms of the Intrinsic Value of Character

The intrinsic value of character is two-fold. That is to say there are two reasons why we want men to possess the character from which right actions flow, apart from the usefulness of these actions either to self or to others. The first is the beauty of such a character, as described above. The second will appear from the following considerations.

All of us have been the recipients—I had almost said victims—of presents which we were unable to use and which may have been indeed a source of embarrassment to us rather than otherwise, and yet which we have valued exceedingly because they bore testimony to the good will and kindliness of spirit of the giver. This good will had not and was never likely to have any utility value because not sufficiently endowed with resources of

money, power, intellectual ability, or strength. We value it because of a deeply rooted craving which finds satisfaction in the mere existence in others of an interest in us. A man treads on our toes in a crowded street car in a great city, and apologizes with every appearance of genuine regret. We may be actually glad of the accident. We shall never see the man a second time. If our heart warms at the kindliness of spirit which he exhibits it is not because of the idea that he will not be likely to hurt us again. It is because we love to find a friendly disposition even in a total stranger. Walter Pater writes:

"Nearly all of us, I suppose, have had our moments in which any effective sympathy for us on the part of others has seemed impossible; in which our pain has seemed a stupid outrage upon us, like some overwhelming physical violence, from which we could take refuge, at best, only in some mere general sense of good will—somewhere in the world, perhaps. And then, to one's surprise, the discovery of that good will, if it were only in a not unfriendly animal, may seem to have explained, to have actually justified to us, the fact of our pain. There have been occasions, certainly, when I have felt that if others cared for me as I cared for them, it would be, not so much a consolation, as an equivalent, for what one has lost or suffered."[1]

Our feelings of warmth for those who care for a cause in which we are interested represent but another application of the same principle. The cause in question need have no moral flavor, as the football interests of our university. But they will of course be deep in proportion as the common interests go down to the roots of life. Veterans who have fought in the same war in defense of the same country know well what these experiences are. The good man feels similarly drawn towards every other good man who is engaged in the warfare against the evils which afflict humanity. A beautiful example of a conflict between love and the dislike which flows from divided and mutually contradictory purposes will be found in Thomas Nelson Page's story *Meh Lady*.

Here, then, is a second source of the intrinsic value of character. The good man recognizes in another good man one who is

[1] *Marius, The Epicurean,* Ch. XXV. *Cf.* above, Chapter V, page 70, the testimony of the citizen of Oakland concerning the days that followed the San Francisco fire.

interested, or is capable of becoming interested in him personally, and who has a common interest with him in the great cause of making the world a better place to live in. And he values this spirit not merely for its effects, but also for its own sake.*

## The Importance of the Intrinsic Value of Character as an Element in Human Life

It remains to inquire what is the significance for life of the immediately admirable and attractive in character. The rôle which Nature has assigned it is not that of determining what is right and what wrong. The rightness of an action is determined by the good which it seeks to create. The function of moral beauty, therefore, is not to reveal new duties, but to supply additional and very powerful motives for performing old ones. Our interest in the good of our neighbor is all too frequently far from strong. Hence it stands in need of reinforcement by other incentives. Of these none is higher, none less liable to corruption and misuse than the aspiration for a perfect character. He who

> "loves himself
> And in that love not unforgotten leaves his honor,"

may be counted upon to travel the same road with him who is most completely inspired by the "enthusiasm of humanity." He who, like Brutus, in Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar,* combines the love of his fellows with this form of self-love will reach in the end the utmost heights of human attainment. For this reason an important part of the work of making ourselves and others better men must consist in awakening and developing to its full strength the passion for beauty of character. Our antipathies have a function almost as important in this regard as our admirations. It is they, to a not inconsiderable extent, that are the source of the demands of what we call self-respect—the desire to keep oneself inwardly clean.

Beauty of character, however, has a direct value as well as an indirect one. If the world of Nature were robbed of its harmonies of color and its grace of form, and were stretched out

*See Notes, X, "The Explanation of the Difference in Our Attitude Towards a Good Man and a Good Piece of Furniture," p. 506.

before the eye monotonous and bare in grays and blacks, its lines everywhere straight and unyielding, we might live just as long and be just as healthy; but life itself, the thing which gives length of days its sole value, would have lost much of its sunshine and its charm and every day be poorer. In the same way it is strength, purity, devotion, and grace of character that invest the human world with its most enduring attractions, and that, after the first freshness of youthful enjoyment has disappeared, give life itself its strongest hold upon our affections. "We live by admiration, hope, and love." And perhaps the greatest, because the most fundamental of these, is admiration.

## Chapter XI

# THE MORAL IDEAS OF PRIMITIVE PEOPLE

The preceding Chapters claim to offer an essentially complete account of the fundamental moral standards of the race. This claim may appear to some readers as justified in its application to the members of our own community. But the assertion that it holds literally for all human beings alike, however high or low their place in the scale of civilization, will seem to many a piece of unwarranted dogmatism. I therefore wish to set forth some of the grounds on which this position is based.

A systematic survey, even in barest outline, of the moral judgments of the race would require for its presentation at least an entire volume. This Chapter, therefore, must set itself a very limited objective. It will confine itself entirely to primitive man, and in this restricted field, to a small group of phenomena which are at once fundamental and typical. With the two extremes, the upper and the lower cultural levels before us, I believe we shall have in our hands the instruments for interpreting the phenomena that lie between. With regard to the moral ideas of primitive man himself I shall assume that the principles which explain the major phenomena will be found competent to serve as a key for the understanding of those which are more sporadic and less important. If this claim can be maintained, then beneath the superficial diversities of conflicting moral standards there will be found to lie essential identities; and the human conscience may properly be regarded as in the last analysis everywhere the same.

When we first walk the streets of a foreign city like Paris or Munich we seem to be in a world inhabited by a different order of beings from ourselves. If the language happens to be unintelligible to us it seems a symbol of the gulf which separates us from all that they are. But when we have lived with the French or the Germans long enough to know them we find them to be

men in all fundamental respects like those we have left behind us in our own country. Just this same thing has happened with regard to primitive man. The ordinary traveler and the cursory reader are often so deeply impressed with the diversities that they can see nothing else. In a certain sense this was true in considerable measure of some of the earlier professional ethnologists. Whatever may be said of the past, however, those contemporary special students whose ideas have been formed through prolonged immediate contact with the primitive mind are practically a unit in their conviction that the differences between it and that of our own race, while sometimes large and always important, are at bottom differences in degree and not in kind, and are indeed, in the large sense of the term, superficial rather than fundamental.[1]

In what I have just been saying about the mind of the savage I have been thinking primarily of his intellectual powers. I do not wish, however, to entangle my argument with unnecessary assertions not directly germane to my task. The problem before us concerns the moral consciousness, and the facts here are what they are, let the strictly cognitive processes in the lower races be what you will. We turn, then, directly to the study of primitive moral standards.

## I

### The Central Identities

Man normally lives in social relations with others. For the first few years of his life his very existence depends upon the help and protection of his elders. As an adult he has a wife and children of his own. By preference, with the rarest of exceptions, he lives in acquaintanceship or friendship with other persons also, especially those of his own sex and in a general way his own age. With these simple and commonplace facts before us the fundamental identity of the moral endowment of the race is well nigh demonstrable *a priori*. If a social group, large or small, is to

[1] See Boas, *The Mind of Primitive Man*, Chs. I and IV; Goldenweiser, *Early Civilization*, Introduction; Kroeber, *Anthropology*, Ch. IV. *Cf.* Hose and McDougall, *Pagan Tribes of Borneo*, Vol. II, p. 221; Rivers, *The Todas*, p. 21; Maximilian, Prince of Wied, *Early Western Travels*, Vol. II, pp. 284-287; Bronislaw Malinowski, *Crime and Custom in Savage Society*.

exist its members must conform to the conditions of existence. If any considerable proportion of them habitually failed to do so, it would be swept away and that part of the earth where it had dwelt would be occupied by others who were better adjusted to their environment. It is indeed actions, not ideas or feelings, that cause men and tribes to survive or perish. But moral ideals are the ultimate source of social actions. To be sure many forms of conduct which are beneficial to others are pleasurable or profitable to the agent himself, so that a conflict between the two ends does not arise. But this harmony is never complete; and all too often where it actually obtains the agent is unconscious of its existence. Public opinion, which comes to the support of social interests with its words of condemnation, its black looks, it ostracism, and its physical penalties, can not be the creation of egoism.[2] The cement that holds society together is thus in the last resort the moral standards of its members. And these standards must be such as to welcome with approval those modes of conduct which make for group survival and repel those which drag it down to death.

In advance of all direct acquaintance with primitive peoples, therefore, we may expect to find among them reprobation for serious cruelty or neglect of offspring (should it occur); for indiscriminate murder; for disloyalty to the group (as cowardice in war); and in addition approbation for the punishment of cowardice and murder.

Observation verifies what logic suggests. If no disapprobation for neglect of children is reported, this is only because it seldom or never has an occasion to show itself. Loyalty to the group will always be found where there are dangerous enemies to be repelled. No people of whom we have any record looks with indifference upon indiscriminate murder. On the contrary murder within the group is regarded as the most serious, or one of the most serious, of crimes. Furthermore, there is no people where the demand is not heard for the punishment by some one in some fashion for some forms of wrong-doing.

As a matter of fact primitive morality always, or practically always, goes a long distance beyond these elementary require-

[2] See above, Chapter V, pages 69 and 73.

ments. It habitually extends its protection, for example, over the institution of property. Among a people who live primarily, or solely, by hunting and fishing, property is of course a very different sort of thing from what it is among us. Where there is no agriculture the land is the common possession either of the local group or the tribe. But unauthorized trespass upon this land is vigorously reprobated and repelled. Over great areas of what we call the savage world the products of the hunt or of the cultivation of the soil are so completely at the disposal of one's neighbors that the conception of private property in food can hardly appear, certainly not in a developed form. But almost everywhere ornaments, clothing (if there is any), weapons, and tools are outside of the jurisdiction of this communistic spirit. In such cases the ancient rule, "Thou shalt not steal," will be found to be in force.

Nowhere, as we shall discover below, is there so much variety as in the views as to the proper relations of the sexes. Nevertheless if we confine ourselves to what men have actually seen and disregard what some speculative anthropologists have guessed, we shall discover in every primitive tribe some regulations dealing with this matter. In particular, "an institution of the nature of marriage is apparently universal. It is improbable that custom has anywhere left the relations of the sexes wholly unregulated, and its regulations include the appropriation of individual men and women to each other." [3]

Parental care, loyalty to one's group, particularly in time of danger, respect for the life of one's fellow-tribesmen and also for such property as may exist and is not open by common consent to general use, some bridling of the sexual impulse, finally the punishment of him who has seriously injured others in any of these points—the demand for these things forms the core of the moral code alike of primitive man and ourselves.

This conclusion may be made more concrete by means of a single illustration. Of the primitive races which have been studied at first hand by competent ethnologists, one of the lowest in the scale of intelligence is the native Australian. A characteristic

[3] Hobhouse, *Morals in Evolution*, 3rd Edition, p. 178. *Cf. Simpler Peoples* (by Mr. Hobhouse and others), Ch. III.

feature of their tribal life was the series of ceremonies in which the youth was required to participate before he was admitted to the status of full citizenship. The purpose of these initiations was to prepare the boy or youth to play the part expected of a man through the acquisition of the tribal traditions and through a series of experiences intended at the same time to test and to develop his courage, resolution, and powers of endurance. In one of the best known of these tribes, in no essential respect different from the others, the novices were explicitly taught, during the initiation period the following rules:

1. To listen to and obey the old men.
2. To share everything they have with their friends.
3. To live peaceably with their friends.
4. Not to interfere with girls or married women.
5. To obey the food restrictions, until they are released from them by the old men.[4]

Since such tribal government as can be said to have existed inhered in the old men, the first rule is equivalent to a demand for obedience to law. Of the second I will only say that it was intended to be interpreted and actually was interpreted to mean quite literally, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Thus the Kurnai code reduced to practice what with us is often little beyond a vague aspiration. There can be no doubt that there is a real difference here, but the difference happens not to be to the disadvantage of the Australians. The injunction to live peaceably with one's friends means to do nothing to stir up wrath. This would involve the refraining from murder, from the stealing of wives, from the making of insulting remarks, from slander, and in general from all forms of injury. What the fourth and fifth prescriptions required we shall see below. The first three certainly might well be used as a part of a ritual for the induction of our own young men into the duties and privileges of citizenship, if we were so fortunate as to have a tradition calling for such a ritual.

### Differences in Outer Morality

When we turn from identities to differences we discover what at first sight seems a bewildering variety of commands and prohi-

[4] A. W. Howitt, *The Native Tribes of Southeast Australia*, p. 633.

bitions, having no points of contact with anything for which we care. For example, Antigone, in the old myth immortalized by Sophocles, feels herself bound to cast three handfuls of dust upon her brother's corpse, though the command of the king against whom he had fought threatens with death anyone who shall in so doing satisfy the requirements of the Greek burial ritual. This supreme act of self-sacrifice she lays upon herself in obedience, as she declares, to the "unwritten laws of God that know not change." What can be the source of a conception of duty apparently so remote from our own? No answer could be more simple. She believes that should the customary funeral rights fail, her brother's spirit would be doomed, like the Wandering Jew, to roam restless, homeless, lonely, and despairing through all the long ages that the world will last. She risks her life in order to save her brother from what she believes will be an eternity of suffering. Most American women would consider themselves bound to face the same dangers in order to save a brother from a fate far less terrible. The difference between Antigone's ideas of duty and those of her American sister of today is thus a difference not in standards, but in opinions about the effects of a certain ceremony. In other words, it is a difference not in inner but in outer morality. And this, as we have seen, is not a difference in moral ideals at all (Chapter IX, page 149).

Countless other apparent differences between the moral codes of primitive people and our own fall into the same category. What could be more abhorrent than the murder of a parent? Yet among the Fiji Islanders a hundred years ago it was little short of a social institution. The explanation here again is sufficiently simple. The Fijis believed in the existence of a spirit world, the counterpart of our own, only far more attractive, for which the soul sets out immediately after death. They believed furthermore that body and mind live in this new world possessed of the same qualities, whether excellences or defects, which they had at the close of this life. Hence it is to a person's advantage to die before his strength becomes impaired and his senses and mental faculties have begun to decay. In consequence, as far

as our data permit us to judge, the majority of such deaths seem to have followed upon the request of the parent himself.[5]

In the preceding examples conduct was guided by conceptions of effects which we should regard as imaginary. But sometimes the situation which determines the action is a grim and undeniable reality. Almost every one has heard of Catlin's account of the abandonment of the aged Indian chief by his people when they were forced to move their camp in order to hunt the buffalo. He writes:

"The tribe was going where hunger and dire necessity compelled them to go, and this pitiable object, who had once been a chief and a man of distinction in his tribe, who was now too old to travel, being reduced to mere skin and bone, was to be left to starve, or meet with such death as might fall to his lot, and his bones to be picked by the wolves. . . He had told [his children and friends] to leave him, 'he was old,' he said, 'and too feeble to march.' 'My children,' he said, 'our nation is poor, and it is necessary that you should all go to the country where you can get meat—my eyes are dimmed and my strength is no more; my days are nearly all numbered, and I am a burden to my children—I can not go and I wish to die.'"[6]

A vast number of the apparent differences between the dictates of our own and the primitive conscience thus represent nothing but differences in conceptions of the effects of actions, and, as such, afford no evidence for the existence of a diversity of moral standards. Many others again, are due to actual differences in particular situations, in consequence of which a standard that among ourselves calls for one concrete mode of conduct, as the care and support of our aged parents, may elsewhere require, or appear to require, the abandonment of the aged to their fate.

### Signs of Respect

Intimately related with the preceding examples of outer morality is the employment of symbols as a means of showing

[5] Thomas Williams and James Calvert, *Fiji and the Fijians* (Edition of 1859), p. 114; *cf.*, p. 190. Wilkes, *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition*, 1838-1842 (1845), Vol. III, pp. 94-97.

[6] George Catlin, *Illustrations of the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians*, 10th Edition. 1866. Vol. I, p. 216.

respect. I shall say a word about this phenomenon, not because it is of any great theoretical importance, least of all because it offers any difficulties beyond the power of the most ordinary mind to penetrate, but because it invariably forms part of the stock in trade of the popular advocates of Subjectivism. Almost every human being, whether high or low in the scale of intelligence, craves the approval and admiration of his neighbors. Hence the ubiquity of the rules calling for the expression of respect. But even an amateur in ethics should be able to see that the signs chosen to indicate the presence of this feeling are necessarily as arbitrary and conventional as the sounds which express ideas. The European man takes off his hat in church as a sign of respect; the Mohammedan takes off his shoes. On meeting a friend we shake hands with him. But the members of an East African tribe, the Masai, "spit on each other both when they meet and when they part, [since] 'spitting expresses the greatest good will and the best of wishes.'"[7] He who finds in such facts as these evidence for differences in moral standards will find evidence for it also in the fact that where we say, "Good-bye," the French say, *"au revoir."* Such persons are best left to their fate.

### Taboos

Before leaving this part of the subject it may be desirable to say a few words about taboos. They have little or no direct connection with the injunctions of morality, properly so-called. But since the relationship between the two is frequently supposed to be a peculiarly intimate one, and the former are sometimes actually declared to be the source of the latter, it may be advisable for us to clarify our ideas as to their significance.

Primitive life is permeated through and through with a complicated system of prohibitions, many of which seem to us wholly senseless, but which invariably extort implicit obedience, and that independently of all human sanctions. They are, however, very far indeed from being devoid of all sanctions; for behind them lie all the mysterious powers of religion and magic, pitiless, unfailing, inescapable, ready to destroy the unfortunate trans-

[7] Westermarck, *The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas,* Vol. II, p. 151.

gressor, as a tornado wipes out everything in its path. To prohibitions of this kind the name taboo is commonly applied, the term being used in a somewhat broader sense than it bore in Polynesia when Captain Cook first heard it, but retaining the same essential features throughout.

I referred above to the food restrictions, the necessity for conformity to which was impressed upon the novices during certain Australian initiation ceremonies. They are, broadly speaking, typical of thousands of others found everywhere in primitive society, and may accordingly supply the material for our brief examination of this subject.

Let us inquire first why these apparently arbitrary regulations are obeyed when the old men are not there to enforce them. Whatever answers to this question are possible, there is always one which represents an adequate and perfectly intelligible motive. Problem and solution alike are stated with all desirable definiteness by Mr. E. M. Curr as follows:

"We find our Blacks, male and female, submitting for years loyally and without exception to a number of irksome restraints, especially in connection with food, just as we Roman Catholics do to the fasts and abstinences imposed by the church. Now the question is, what is the hidden power which secures the Black's scrupulous compliance with custom in such cases? What is it, for instance, which prompts the hungry Black boy, when out hunting with the White man, to refuse (as I have often seen him do) to share in a meal of emu flesh, or in some other sort of food forbidden to those of his age, when he might easily do so without fear of detection by his tribe? . . . My reply is . . . that the Black is educated from infancy in the belief that departure from the customs of his tribe is inevitably followed by one at least of many evils, such as becoming early grey, ophthalmia, skin eruptions, or sickness; but, above all, that it exposes the offender to the danger of death by sorcery."[8]

One reason, then—and that a sufficient one—for not violating the taboos of the tribe is nothing more nor less mysterious than that which explains why we do not handle live wires and drink unboiled water swarming with typhoid fever germs, and why we avoid contact with smallpox patients and protect ourselves against mosquito bites in districts infested with malarial fever.

We may next ask why these prohibitions are imposed. Partly,

[8] *The Australian Race,* Vol. I, p. 54.

without doubt, in the selfish interests of certain members of the tribe. The old men in particular want to keep the tidbits for themselves. It is as if we should forbid turkey to the children. Even here, however, the selfishness is not unadulterated. For in the Australian bush age carries respect, because it is supposed to connote excellence. And excellence, as we have seen, is widely held to confer superior rights. But there are other reasons besides selfishness, whether pure or mixed with moral considerations. The special food taboos in force during the initiation periods, for example, clearly have a purpose which is identical, as far as it goes, with that of the ceremonies as a whole. They aim to make a man, that is to say a worthy member of the tribe, out of an unformed boy; and, at the same time to reveal how much manhood, measured in terms of the requirements of his individual and tribal life, he possesses. He is accordingly sent out into the bush and forbidden to eat the more common animals, with a view to testing and developing his powers of self-control. When once such customs are started, moreover, there is no reason to doubt that the old men are as fully convinced as anyone else that the magical penalties will fall upon the disobedient. Were they not so taught when they themselves were young? And why should they doubt it now they are old?[9]

Obviously the notion that the taboo is a source of morality is simply one form of the shop-worn idea that morality is the creation of egoism. I have said what I have to say on this subject in another place (Chapter V).

## II

### Tribal Morality

However far the distinction between inner and outer morality may carry us, it will not serve to explain all the facts. On the contrary there exist many real diversities in moral judgments properly so-called. Certain of these we shall now proceed to examine.

[9] On the Australian food restrictions see Spencer and Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, pp. 467-473; the same authors, *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, pp. 611-615; Howitt, *The Native Tribes of Southeast Australia*, pp. 560-561.

On the whole the profoundest and most important difference between primitive standards and our own is represented by the phenomenon called tribal morality. This in its undiluted form means that a man recognizes no obligations whatever to anyone who is not a member of his own tribe.

What wild beasts are to most men, that is a stranger to most savages. In their view his claims stand at zero and thus he is literally a being without any rights which they feel bound to respect. He may accordingly be robbed, enslaved, maimed, tortured, or killed, as policy, pleasure, passion, or whim may happen to dictate. Of our ancestors in the forests of northern Europe two thousand years ago Julius Cæsar wrote in that book of painful memories, *The Gallic War:*

"In the case of all the states, acts of brigandage committed outside the boundaries involve no disgrace; the reason advanced being that by these acts the young men of the land are kept fit and prevented from becoming slothful. And when any one of the chieftains says in public council that he will be leader and bids whoever is willing to follow so declare, those who approve both cause and man rise and promise their aid and are praised by the multitude." [10]

If the victims of these raids attempted to defend themselves, as they presumably would, they would of course be killed. But this was a matter of no concern. When you are rifling a beehive you will know how to treat any of the bees that are so indiscreet as to be annoying. To men on the other side of a boundary line, then, the ancient German was a pitiless wolf. And yet his relations with the members of his own tribe were such that they were held up by Tacitus to his own fellow-countrymen as a model for imitation.

The Greeks of the Homeric period were in the same stage of moral development. When Telemachus fares forth in search of his father, the much enduring Ulysses, he comes to the court of Nestor. The old man greets him and his companions with the words: "Strangers, who are ye? Whence sail ye over the wet ways? On some trading enterprise, or at adventure do ye rove,

[10] Book VI, Ch. XXIII. For parallels among the American Indians see Charlevoix, *Journal of a Voyage to North America, 1720-1722* (translated by Louise Kellogg), Vol. I, pp. 300, 310; Lewis Morgan, *The League of the Iroquois* (Edition of 1904), pp. 68-69

even as sea-robbers, over the brine; for they wander at hazard of their lives, bringing bale to alien men." [11] This inquiry was no more intended as an insult than it would be for you to ask a man if he was a football player. As public opinion then stood, Telemachus could not be expected to object to being taken for a pirate. Certainly if he had protested, he would have been throwing stones at his own father. For when the latter returns home after his long wanderings and discovers that all his flocks and herds have been devoured by his wife's suitors, he comforts himself with the declaration: "As for the sheep that the proud wooers have slain, I myself will lift many more as spoil"—from some neighboring people, of course, over on the mainland.

The principle at the foundation of tribal morality is, however, seldom, perhaps never, carried through with complete consistency. Some primitive people recognize certain laws of war, especially in the treatment of women and children. Many of them have and many more profess to have a strict regard for the sanctity of treaties and the inviolability of heralds and messengers. What is more significant, most tribes live habitually on friendly terms with certain of their neighbors, often with all their immediate neighbors. It seems clear from the testimony of ethnologists that in such cases the members of a friendly tribe are looked upon as possessing the same fundamental rights as a fellow-tribesman.

The best known and probably most common exception to the principle of tribal morality consists in the recognition of a binding obligation to extend hospitality to the stranger from without the tribe in his capacity as traveler. He is the object of every attention in the often elaborate ritual of primitive politeness. He is given the best seat by the fire; the choicest food available is placed before him; if the food supply is low his needs are provided for first. If he is attacked his host must defend him at the risk of his own life. Many people require that hospitality be shown even to an enemy. In some respects the most imperative duty laid upon the conscience of primitive man is that of avenging a wrong done to a member of his family. Yet in certain

[11] *The Odyssey* (Butcher and Lang translation), Book III, p. 33.

parts of the world the plea of the stranger for food and shelter must be granted even though he be the slayer of your father or brother.

Ordinarily, to be sure, a limit is set to the claims of the traveler. Among the Arabs of the desert, who were famous for their hospitality, as among our ancestors, the ancient Germans, the life of the obligation ran for three days when it abruptly terminated. Anything beyond this was apparently felt to be "sponging." [12]

The problem raised by tribal morality is this: Can practices which differ so radically from any which we approve have their source in a conscience built upon the same plan and working according to the same laws as our own? Perhaps we may be able to answer this question if we inquire into their causes.

"The Australian native," write Spencer and Gillen, "obeys literally the command of the Scriptures, 'Take no thought of the morrow.' " This means that his will is moved by the concrete, detailed picture; not by the abstract idea. That pale unreality, the self of next year, is a being for whose welfare he feels no particular concern. So it is with regard to others. In his dealings with the members of his local group and, indeed, of his tribe, he is very much of a communist. This seems to be due, in part, to the fact that he lives on terms of the most intimate relationship with them. "If we all ate at the same table no one would be allowed to go hungry." Thus parallel with a very lively interest in the self of today goes an interest in those with whom he is in daily association. And parallel to his indifference to the interests of the self of next year seems to go an indifference to those whose lives are remote from his own. Now what is true of the Australian "black fellow" is true, in the main, of primitive man as such. And in this feature of his mind is to be found one cause of tribal morality.

But this is neither the sole nor, as I conceive the matter, the most important cause. One of the leading characteristics of all members of the human race, whatever the level of their civiliza-

[12] *Cf.* Westermarck, *The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas*, Vol. I, Ch. XXIV, "Hospitality."

tion, is inordinate corporate conceit. We are the salt of the earth; virtue as well as wisdom will die with us.[13] All other peoples are beings of an inferior mould, perhaps mere reptiles whose place is at our feet, or under our heel. How can a real man have any obligations to creatures so low? The tendency of human nature, as we know, is to make moral claims dependent upon excellence. Where there is no excellence there are no rights. Therefore there can be no obligations to the wretched pariahs beyond the tribal boundary line.

A third factor of even greater significance is a fusion of fear and resentment; resentment for past injuries, real or imaginary; fear at the possibility of future ones. Howitt points out that in Australia the names given to alien tribes ordinarily express either contempt or fear.[14] Curr writes:

"The Australian Black, without exception, nurtures, one might almost say from the cradle to the grave, an intense hatred of every male, at least of his race, who is a stranger to him. The reason they themselves assign for what I must term this diabolical feeling is that all strangers are in league to take their lives by sorcery. The result of this belief is that, whenever they can, the Blacks in their wild state never neglect to massacre all male strangers who fall into their power." [15]

To understand this statement is must be noted that most savage peoples are unable to conceive of death as due to natural causes. Apart from accident, it is attributed either to an evil spirit, or a human enemy; in many parts of the world solely or chiefly to the latter. When a death takes place among the Australian aborigines the family at once consult some medicine man to discover who is responsible. He is always able to name the culprit, but never locates him within his own tribe, as that would be likely to get him into trouble. The alleged murderer thus turns out to be a member of another tribe. If he escapes the avenging party that sets out to take his life, he will forever look upon himself as the innocent victim of the diabolical machinations of a wicked

[13] See Westermarck, *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 170-174.
[14] *Op. cit.*, p. 41.
[15] *Op. cit.*, p. 85. *Cf.* Baldwin, Spencer, *The Native Tribes of the Northern Territory of Australia*, pp. 37-38.

man. If he is struck down, his family and kin will be confident of his guiltlessness. Thus everyone concerned believes himself wronged, and the blood feud is on. The mutual hatred thus engendered thereupon tends to spread to the entire tribe.

There are, of course, other causes of war in the savage world besides the fear of and anger at the practice of sorcery, together with their immediate and mediate consequences. There are wife stealing, trespass upon the tribal hunting grounds, and other offenses where the acts of individuals end by embroiling their tribes. Some primitive people have embarked more or less deliberately on careers of conquest, as many of the Polynesians and the Iroquois in the United States. Among many peoples, as most of the American Indians and the primitive Germans, there has been an intense love of war for its own sake which has magnified any pretext into a just cause, or failing to find a pretext, has fought anyway. In such wars one party is always in the wrong and often both are. Usually, or always, unbridled passions produce outrages which awaken the thirst for retaliation. Most primitive people never forgive an unexpiated wrong, and they hold responsible for a crime all who have sheltered and protected the culprit, who can be supposed to have sympathized with him, who are willing to live on friendly terms with him, or in whose veins flows the same tainted blood.[16] Thus comes into existence a vicious circle from which most savage peoples never escape. Fear and resentment cause private and public wars, and private and public wars cause fear and resentment.

These then are the leading factors, I believe, which combine to produce tribal morality. And the most important, I repeat, appear to be fear and resentment. The correctness of this conclusion seems to be attested by two facts. One is that where the suspicion of death by sorcery and other causes of war can be kept out, members of neighboring tribes seem usually to live on terms of positive friendliness and to recognize the full quota of obligations with reference to one another. The second is of a similar nature. It is the kindliness with which the white man is received almost everywhere in the savage world, provided he has

[16] On this extension of responsibility see above, Chapter V, page 90; and Westermarck, *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 30 ff.

not become an object of either suspicion or resentment whether through his own actions or those of other members of his race. The century-long friendship between the English and the Iroquois, the perfect understanding maintained between William Penn and his followers on the one hand, and their Indian neighbors on the other, the beautiful devotion of Livingstone's black servants to their master—these are famous instances. But thousands of white men, alike the illustrious and the obscure, have traveled among and lived with the members of the lower races, oftentimes for years together, without having been subjected to as many wrongs as they would have met in their own country; on the contrary, in many instances, they have been treated with a kindness and sometimes a devotion which belong among the precious records of the finest achievements of the human race. Catlin writes:

"I have travelled several years already among [the Indians of the Western plains], and I have not had my scalp taken nor a blow struck me; nor had occasion to raise my hand against an Indian; nor has my property been stolen to the value of a shilling; and that in a country where no man is punishable by law for the crime of stealing." [17]

Do we find in the phenomena of tribal morality evidence of a moral consciousness totally different from our own? I think not. Contempt, fear, resentment, especially when united with feebleness of imagination and an incapacity to react to abstract ideas of good—these will kill benevolence and awake malevolence to life, especially where they are allowed to run their course for centuries without interruption. They have done this for primitive man; they would do it for us.

### Class Morality

We have seen how each localized group—whether tribe or nation—tends to become separated from every other by moral barriers. Similarly the community tends to become divided horizontally into a number of layers according to the supposed excellence, physical, mental, and moral, of its members. The most important of the resultant distinctions are those based on sex, on the relationship of master and slave, and on social stand-

[17] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 210; *cf.* Vol. II, p. 109.

ing and political power. These distinctions often carry with them great differences in rights and duties, the principle being that the greater the excellence the more extensive and unqualified become the rights, and the fewer and less imperative the duties with respect to one's inferiors. This phenomenon may be called class morality. This principle is nowhere carried through consistently to the end. It represents rather a tendency which is found to prevail more completely at one point in one society, and at a different point in some other. The forces which set themselves against the erection and maintenance of these class barriers can work more effectively here than they can between groups because here the individuals are living together, in part under the same roof, and always in more or less complete interdependence. On the other hand in some instances the forces which make for tribal morality unite with class morality, as where slaves are foreigners, especially prisoners of war; or again where the aristocracy is composed of a body of invaders who keep their blood relatively pure by refraining, more or less completely, from marrying into the subject race. The outcome of the interaction of these agencies is a much greater diversity of individual forms than in tribal morality, and nothing like so thoroughgoing and complete a carrying-through of the principle itself.

The details, if there were but space to present them, would bear out this statement of underlying principles beautifully. The lot of the slave, for example, is invariably better, both in respect to his moral and legal status and his actual treatment, where he is a member of the same race with his master, where he is born and has grown up in his master's house, above all, as was true of the Greek slaves of Roman masters, where he is looked upon as an equal, or even a superior, in intellectual endowment. Indeed most moral codes require that all slaves, apart from condemned criminals and debtors, shall be the members of at least a different tribe and nation; preferably of a different and inferior race. Moral approval of slavery, in other words, can in most instances be explained by the fact that he whom it is considered legitimate to hold as a slave is outside either the group of the "near" or the "excellent," and commonly both.

The detailed facts with regard to the rights and duties of the various classes to each other are too numerous and complicated for presentation in this place. Moreover the important ones are easily accessible in standard works. But there is one thing to which I feel I must call attention before turning to other matters. The attitude of the privileged towards the unprivileged is not necessarily—as some people seem to think—a pose adopted with a view to facilitating the transfer to themselves of all the good things of life and the rolling off upon other shoulders of the world's dirty work. The contempt which they have often exhibited towards their inferiors was in many or most cases a genuine reaction based on the actual inferiority of the latter in those activities which all classes agreed were the most admirable. Thus in very many primitive and half-civilized societies the shortest or the sole road to honor lies through success in war. This means that the intellectual and moral qualities demanded by war are those which call forth the most spontaneous and enthusiastic admiration. In such a society the male heartily and honestly despises the female because she can not participate in such activities. He may respect her judgment at many points, he may admire many traits of her character; but as a rule he can not see over the fact that she is not a warrior. Now women may take precisely this same attitude toward themselves. "The Indian," writes Lewis Morgan, "regarded woman as an inferior, a dependent, and the servant of man, and from nurture and habit, she actually considered herself to be so." [18]

As we learned in Chapter III the tendency to equate rights with excellence is a universal fact of human nature. We have therefore every reason to believe that women, slaves, or proletarians living under a régime of class morality, especially among a warlike people, would see nothing unfair in the discriminations made at every turn to their disadvantage, but would look upon this distribution of goods and evils as a matter of simple, elementary justice.

All this leads to an answer of the question parallel to that which we raised at the end of our survey of tribal morality. Do

[18] *The League of the Iroquois* (Edition of 1904), Part I, p. 315, *Cf.*, pp. 320, 329. *Cf.* also Catlin, *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 226.

the phenomena of class morality indicate a conscience built according to an entirely different pattern from our own? I answer that in all their multiplicity they are still, for the most part, only variations of a single theme: Rights are a function of excellence. Hence they represent nothing which is foreign to the moral code of civilized man.

### Infanticide

I can not leave this part of the subject without referring specifically to the treatment of one "class," or group in the community, namely new-born infants; for it concerns the most repellent of all the practices of uncivilized man. I mean infanticide. In comparison with it slavery and the subjection of women and of the members of the lower classes seem relatively insignificant aberrations. Even here, however, we can explain the facts without assuming the existence of a moral consciousness different in kind from our own. Infanticide occurs among many uncivilized and some civilized peoples with apparently little or no personal compunction or public condemnation. The explanations of this attitude are fear of overpopulation with its appalling train of evils; the bitter lot of the children, especially the daughters of the very poor; the belief that a child born diseased or deformed is better off dead than alive; among the hunting peoples, the impossibility of moving from place to place with several very young children as impedimenta. An additional reason for infanticide among the Australian aborigines and elsewhere lies in the fact that "if the mother is suckling one child she cannot properly provide food for another, quite apart from the question of the trouble of carrying two children about." [19] This situation was of not infrequent occurrence among the Australians since suckling was continued often up to the age of three years or even longer.

Such are the chief considerations which have justified in the eyes of its perpetrators the murder of infants where the practice has been at all common. To understand this phenomenon completely, however, certain other facts must be taken into account. Almost everywhere the infant must be killed, usually at once, or

[19] Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes of Central Australia*, p. 264.

at the longest within a very few days after birth; in other words before sympathy and love for the little victim have had time to grow strong. Upon the expiration of the allotted time his life is as secure from violence as that of any other member of the community. Furthermore, the decision upon life or death is ordinarily in the hands of the father, not the mother; and the father would commonly feel less love than the mother for a newborn child. Indeed, nothing more remote from the ways of the nineteenth century Caucasian world is required to explain the facts than the icy indifference of most slaveholders to the fate of the children begotten by them of slave women. Finally when a cruel practice becomes common the feelings often grow callous in that particular direction, even in otherwise excellent persons. Witness the way in which the sensibilities of good men who live in large cities become dulled to the sight of poverty which is continually being thrust upon them.

The phenomena of infanticide in primitive society accordingly seem to find their explanation primarily in the pressure exerted by a harsh material environment, supplemented by the partial or complete dormancy of benevolence under certain assignable conditions in relation to certain members of the community.

## III

### Marriage Relations:—The Facts

The historian of moral ideas, as we have seen, must record the existence of three great class divisions in human society if he is to explain the actual distribution of recognized rights and duties. Of these pairs at once the most permanent and important is that represented by the two sexes. But difference in sex not merely divides society into two classes, with their reciprocal obligations to each other as human beings, it also gives rise to a group of problems of its own. As the divergences in the solutions offered for these problems are among the most striking and also most significant which life has to show, and as they supply the Subjectivist with some of his favorite arguments, we shall be compelled to give them our attention.

The problems in question center about the institution of mar-

riage, and the chief topics that demand our consideration are the following: (1) The conditions under which marriage is permitted or forbidden; (2) the methods by which a wife is obtained; (3) the conditions under which the marriage union may be annulled; (4) the number of persons who may form a union with each other; (5) freedom of extra-marital relations. For an adequate picture of the bewildering mass of details in this field the reader must turn to the special studies on the subject. I shall confine myself to a bare statement of underlying principles.

Practically the sole legal barrier to the marriage of sane adults among European peoples is blood relationship. The prohibition of the union of near kin obtains universally, or well-nigh universally, throughout the human race. In some parts of the world it is carried much farther than others; but the core of the system is everywhere the same, namely the condemnation of marriage between parent and offspring, and brother and sister. Here and there the rule with regard to the union of the latter has been relaxed. But this is where a royal family, as in ancient Egypt or modern Siam, or where a small aristocracy, as in some of the Polynesian Islands, has been determined to keep its blood pure and undefiled at whatever cost.

One of the characteristic features of primitive morality is the addition of a second prohibition for which our society lacks even the necessary presupposition. It forbids not merely the marriage of near relations, but also that of members of the same clan. The clan is "a unilateral kinship group." That is to say, it consists of a number of persons supposed to be the descendants of a common ancestor, and the descent is reckoned solely through either the father or the mother, as the case may be. Among the Winnebago Indians of Wisconsin, for example, descent was counted through the father. This man, his children, male and female, the children of his sons, and so forth, formed the clan. Among the Iroquois, on the other hand, it was the mother and her children, male and female, and the descendants of the female, that were bound together in the clan. It is true that investigation often fails to disclose complete unity of descent, many clans apparently consisting of the descendants of

several wholly unrelated ancestors. But belief in this unity on the part of its members (or failing this, a "make-believe" belief in it) is the foundation of its existence. The significance of the clan as a barrier to marriage consists in the fact that whereas you may perhaps be allowed to marry an own cousin who is outside of it, you may not marry a cousin at the remotest remove who is within the sacred enclosure.[20]

The clan is more permanent and in some respects more firmly united than the family. The latter may be rent asunder by divorce or desertion; not so, the former. There is no divorcing oneself from it, nor is the tie broken by marriage. "I know of no case whatsoever," writes Professor Lowie, "in which a man enters his wife's [clan]; and of the contrary possibility the only good illustration seems to be that of the Toda [a hill tribe of southern India], where the wife adopts her husband's [clan]." [21] Ordinarily the members of the clan feel bound to each other by certain special obligations. One of the most widely recognized of these is that of avenging a wrong done to a fellow clansman. In some parts of the world the members of a clan feel the same pride in each other's success and shame in each other's disgrace as would be felt with us among the members of a family. The strength of the tie unquestionably varies greatly in different parts of the world, but where it reaches its maximum there may occur such an incident as the following: "Darius having offered Intaphernes to spare one of her relatives whom she might select, she chose her brother in preference to her husband or her children. With descent through males he was [a member of her clan]; these were not." [22]

Now wherever we find the clan system we discover that the tie binding its members together is felt to be of the same nature as that which unites members of the same family. Hence the prohibition against intermarriage which applies to the latter is transferred to the former.

This second barrier to marriage, it must be understood, in no

[20] The clan must be distinguished from the local group. The latter is sometimes composed solely of members of the former; but very often it is not.

[21] *Primitive Society*, p. 115.

[22] Fison and Howitt, *Kamilaroi and Kurnai*, note on p. 125.

way destroys or interferes with the first. Parent and child, for example, may not marry under any circumstances, though the latter is necessarily a member of a different clan from one of the parents.[23]

In the European world of today, as we all know, the typical, though not the sole method of obtaining a wife is through an agreement entered into directly by the principals themselves. In primitive society, on the other hand, the typical, though again not the sole method, is by purchasing her from her parents, somewhat as you might a horse. You may offer material goods of one sort or another, or, lacking these, you may pay in personal services, as Jacob paid for Leah and Rachel. Sometimes where the conditions of life exclude these two forms of barter an exchange of a different nature will be effected: A gives B his sister and receives B's sister in return.

The European races are in almost hopeless confusion as to what constitutes proper grounds for the dissolution of the marriage tie. As might perhaps be expected there is still less unity of opinion in the savage world. At one extreme there are such peoples as the Veddahs, a forest tribe in Ceylon, the inhabitants of the Andaman Islands, off the east coast of India, and the Igorrotes of the Philippines, who do not permit divorce on any ground whatever. At the other are certain of the American Indian tribes, among whom the union can be dissolved practically at will by either party, without formalities.

As to the number of those who may enter into wedlock with each other, the overwhelming majority of the race live under either one of two régimes, monogamy and polygyny. Monogamy is found in every grade of culture from the lowest, but the permission of polygyny (which is a very different thing from the actual practice of it) is the rule throughout the uncivilized world.

Polygamy, the marriage of one person with two or more mates, has two leading forms; polygyny, or the marriage of one man with two or more women, and polyandry, or the marriage of one woman with two or more men. Polyandry is an exceedingly

[23] There are some other marriage prohibitions of secondary importance. For these see Westermarck, *History of Human Marriage*, 5th Edition, Ch. XIX; Lowie, *Op. cit.*, pp. 15-17.

sporadic phenomenon, and is practiced not merely by very few groups, but by groups which, with the exception of the agricultural population of Thibet, are very small in number. With almost no exceptions the husbands are brothers. With perhaps no exception whatever it is found in connection either with extreme poverty or with female infanticide. But whether in the latter case the infanticide is cause or effect seems to be impossible to determine with certainty.[24] It is alleged by some writers that certain primitive customs reveal the traces of a former state of promiscuity, or of group marriage, which latter may or may not be thought to have followed upon the former. These views are still maintained by some authorities. I judge, however, that its opponents include in their number most of the rising generation of ethnologists. Certainly this is true of the Americans. To me the evidence adduced for either group marriage or promiscuity seems totally incapable of bearing the weight placed upon it. But I can not undertake to discuss the problem.[25]

With regard, finally, to extra-marital relations, again all conceivable possibilities are actually represented in some part of the primitive world. Among the Veddahs of Ceylon and some other peoples, along with strict monogamy and the demand for a lifelong union, there goes the prohibition of any extra-marital relations whatever. On the other hand there are peoples who stand at the other extreme, including a few where such relations to which a married woman is a party apparently call forth no reprobation. Between these extremes a large number of transition forms can be found, representing not merely practice, but practice which the community does not condemn, and occasionally even demands.

### Marriage Relations:—The Explanations of the Facts

The problem presented by these facts is essentially that raised by tribal morality. In each case we find many practices condemned by our own code which are looked upon as innocent by primitive people. We even find an obligation where we ourselves

[24] See W. H. R. Rivers, *The Todas*, pp. 518, 520, 521.

[25] Consult Lowie, *Op. cit.*, pp. 49-62; Westermarck, *History of Human Marriage*, 5th Edition, Vol. III, Ch. XXXI.

should feel only abhorrence, as the practice of wife lending, which in some parts of the world is required by the laws of hospitality and under certain other special conditions. The question is, can a conscience which permits, or in some instances demands these things be composed of the same materials, be built upon the same fundamental plan, and work according to the same laws as our own?

In order to answer this question we must, as before, inquire into the causes which have produced these different results. We shall seek first for the causes which have brought into existence the code which prevails among ourselves.

In the first place, then, marriage is the product of economic forces. Men and women must have a home of some sort, or its equivalent, if they are to live at all, to say nothing of living well. The maintenance of the home requires the differentiated and at the same time coöperating activities of both man and woman. The family thus represents the most ancient form of the division of labor. What was true of the past is equally true today, notwithstanding the enormous gap that separates our complicated civilization from its simple progenitor. We are sometimes told that the changes of the past century have destroyed the economic functions of woman. But as long as the family live in a home instead of a hotel the wife will maintain her agelong position as an economic factor of the first importance.

In the second place the institution of marriage has arisen to provide for the nurture of children. It seeks to secure for every child the protection and care of both parents. Those who in any degree realize how hard a thing life may be even under the most favorable external conditions will regard as a crime only less serious than murder the thrusting of a child into the world with no assured provision for its economic support, its physical care, and its intellectual and moral education; and no provision for its membership in a family, the group where its needs for companionship, sympathy, and affection can most completely be met. While many persons have no adequate sense of responsibility with regard to the fulfilment of these duties, the extreme case of an infant disowned or seriously neglected by its parents practically never fails to outrage the moral feelings of the community.

So necessary is the home now adjudged to be for the proper development of the child that as far as possible orphans and foundlings are kept out of the "asylums" into which they were herded two generations ago and are placed in families.

Marriage among ourselves, furthermore, exists as an instrumentality for assuring the father of the paternity of his children. The husband who must take upon himself his share of the responsibilities involved in the care of the children born to his wife wants the certainty that these children are his own. He wants to feel the kind of union with them which, he believes, could only arise when he knows they are of the same blood with himself. Only then, he thinks, can his affections flow freely, and his pride in their excellences and achievements have free rein. It may indeed be true that a man can feel great love for a foster-child, in some cases not less than for his own offspring. But this, perhaps, represents the exception rather than the rule; and most men would be inclined in advance of experience to doubt whether it would hold of themselves. Even if they were convinced it would, such a relationship would not appeal to them as equally satisfying with that between a father and the son who was "bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh."

Finally the characteristic features of the code of the most highly civilized contemporary peoples have in part their source in the conviction that love is the most precious, or at the lowest count, one of the most precious possessions in life; and that marriage offers at once the opportunity and the occasion for the most satisfying form of companionship and love, the permanent union of a man and a woman.

Permanent and strong love of husband and wife for each other and for their children is recognized as not merely desirable *per se,* but also as a means to an end. The end is, in part, the permanence of the marriage union, whose dissolution, however necessary it may sometimes be, is always preceded, almost invariably attended, and commonly followed by much distress. Just as important is the fact that love is the most powerful creator of the spirit, which serves without measuring with careful eye precisely what it is to receive by way of return; for it is only where this spirit lives that there can be any adequate

security for the discharge of even the most elementary and external duties involved in the family relationship.

If we are to understand our modern ideals of marriage we must add one more feature, the growing recognition of the fact that the fundamental interests of a woman are just as precious as those of a man, and are equally entitled to consideration. I should perhaps add that this conviction is not identical with the belief that women should have a larger measure of legal power, for example over the family property and the custody and care of the children; still less that they have an inalienable right to exercise this or that political function. Many of those who opposed the undoubtedly salutary reforms which have changed entirely the legal status of woman, particularly the wife and mother, during the past hundred years, were actuated by the conviction that the unity of the family was being endangered. They would have been far from denying, however, the equal right of women with men to access to the best things of life.

The form which the institution of marriage has actually taken among us is undoubtedly due to the coöperation and interaction of a number of forces. Of these the most important has been the aim to attain more and more completely the ends which have just been set forth. It is on the ground of their incompatibility with these values that extra-marital relations are condemned, that the consent and indeed the initiative of the persons immediately concerned are coming to be widely regarded as essential, and that divorce is allowed, for the most part, only under conditions so exceptional that the knowledge of its possibility is not likely to destroy the presumption of the permanency of the union for those who enter it. It is for the same reasons that polygamy has everywhere given way to monogamy with the advance of civilization. It is recognized that full and complete love, a love based not merely upon mutual confidence and respect, but also upon companionship in the deepest sense of the term, can exist only where there is a one to one relationship, where the woman has the undivided devotion of the man, just as the man expects to have the undivided devotion of the woman.

If we turn from civilized to primitive society and ask what is here demanded of marriage we shall discover, I believe, the

reasons for the differences in standards which are so often found at the two levels. The central fact is the absence of affection as a motive to marriage and the predominance of the economic factor.

"The primary motive, so far as the individual mates are concerned, is precisely the founding of a self-sufficient economic aggregate. A Kai . . . marries because he needs a woman to make pots and to cook his meals, to manufacture nets and weed his plantations, in return for which he provides the household with game and fish and builds the dwelling." [26]

"From the very nature of the marriage institution among the Iroquois, it follows that the passion of love was entirely unknown among them. Affection after marriage would naturally spring up between the parties from association, from habit, and from mutual dependence; but of that marvelous passion which originates in a higher development of the powers of the human heart, and is founded upon a cultivation of the affections between the sexes, they were entirely ignorant. In their temperaments, they were below this passion in its simplest forms. Attachments between individuals or the cultivation of each other's affections before marriage, was entirely unknown." [27]

These two pictures, dealing with peoples so remote from each other as the inhabitants of the Island of New Guinea and of the State of New York are fairly representative. Marriage in primitive society is primarily a business partnership, to whose function is added the care of the children who are its issue. In our own country business partners often contract a strong friendship for each other; furthermore some men have undoubtedly become partners because they were first friends. Similarly there is unquestionably found a certain amount of marital affection among the simpler races. Elopements, also, are not unknown. The fact remains that love in the higher sense of the term does not determine the nature of the institution, or the attitude towards it, of public opinion as a whole. I must add that when primitive man marries he is acquiring not so much a partner as a servant, or perhaps better, a housekeeper. The story of the Fiji chief who, in a burst of friendship, said to an English official: "I shall have much pleasure in giving you one of my many wives," no doubt represents a somewhat extreme point of view. Nevertheless

[26] Lowie, *Op. cit.*, p. 65.
[27] Lewis Morgan, *Op. cit.* (Edition of 1904), Vol. I, p. 313.

it sheds a real light upon the attitude of the majority of savage men towards marriage.[28]

This external conception of marriage accounts in great part for the characteristic features of the primitive code of sexual morality. It explains the custom of obtaining a wife by purchasing her. Her consent, furthermore, since she is regarded as an inferior being, is as unnecessary as that of a horse to a change of ownership. This conception of marriage explains, in great part, also, the attitude towards divorce. A man ought to be able to dismiss his servants at will, although of course complications produced by parenthood enter, and destroy any complete parallelism. At all events free divorce is not likely to produce serious economic hardships. The man can find other servants. The woman is sure of a welcome in her father's hut, if for no other reason because she will give in labor as much as she gets in food. And for the same reason she will have little difficulty in finding a new "job," that is to say, a second husband. Similarly with regard to polygyny. Why should not a man have two servants rather than one, if he can afford it? As for the woman, she will often welcome an additional wife who will share the work with her. Besides she can then pose as the wife of a wealthy man and thus enjoy a certain standing among the other women to which she might otherwise not attain.

The love of parents for children appears to be as deep and as absorbing among primitive peoples as among ourselves. In many races, however, the fact of identity of blood seems to have little or nothing to do with the case. Of some it is distinctly stated that they have no interest in the question of paternity whatever. They become attached to those children who are dependent upon them from infancy, or who are offspring of the woman or women who belong to them. And this is the sole or dominant condition of the rise of affection for the child. Williams tells of a Fiji who actually arranged in advance with his wife to murder their own child at birth in order that a recently adopted infant might be nursed by her and might otherwise benefit by her care.[29] This, like the other Fijian story, doubtless

[28] A. B. Brewster, *The Hill Tribes of Fiji*, p. 18.
[29] Williams and Calvert, *Fiji and the Fijians*, 1859, p. 142.

represents the extreme rather than the type. None the less it is significant. This indifference to paternity supplies, in part, the key to the indifference with which extra-marital relations are viewed in many parts of the savage world. On the other hand if a woman bears a child before marriage there is always someone glad to take care of it, and the care will be on the average just as good as if it were born of married parents. If after a marriage a child is born whose father is someone else than the husband, the latter does not object, provided the relationship was entered into with his consent, as in wife-lending. If not, this would be a very different matter because it would be a violation of his property rights.

It is this absence of affection as a factor in the selection of mates that helps to account for the wide scope and sometimes the eccentric boundary lines of the field of prohibited degrees. Where there is no thought of affection, especially where betrothal takes place in infancy or childhood, so that even choice on the basis of efficiency can not enter, one woman will do about as well as another. To us, some of these limitations would be intolerable, and sooner or later they would be destroyed. But the savage does not find them particularly oppressive. With his conceptions as to what marriage has to offer he is in much the position of the chorus girls in one of the musical comedies:

"I've got to marry some one
So it might as well be you."

With these facts before us we return to our original question: Can men with these standards of sexual morality have a moral consciousness like our own? We find that some of the differences between the codes are due to general conditions of life, in virtue of which certain forms of laxness carry with them in the primitive world consequences far less serious than would follow in a more highly developed society. Some (the rules against intermarriage within the clan) are the result of the existence of a different social structure from ours. Still others are due to differences in the strength of the desire for the consciousness of paternity. But the most important are explainable by the relative or complete absence of any thought of mutual affection and a sense of con-

geniality and comradeship between husband and wife as a value-giving factor in the marriage relation. Any practice which we see endangering this value, or any practice which we even dimly feel may endanger it, we condemn. In the determination of our attitudes mere attachment to the customary because it is familiar doubtless plays a certain rôle. But where customs are recognized as at once valueless and burdensome they have a way of disappearing.[30] Hence the blind clinging to that which is, merely because it is, can not be the fundamental factor.

Morality deals with values or goods. All human beings unite in condemning such forms of conduct as destroy, or threaten to destroy, that which they value. A people, any considerable proportion of whom had any real appreciation of the beautiful in nature, would never tolerate the placing of bill-boards where they disfigure the countryside, as they do today. But where a man can see no difference between a bill-board and Mt. Ranier except in the matter of size, what reason has he for chafing? Thus it is with primitive man in the matter of sex relations. He looks with indifference upon much which we condemn, not because the principles on which he distributes approbation and condemnation are fundamentally different from our own, but because he is blind to certain values which those who have experienced them will always regard as among the most precious possessions of mankind.

## IV

### The Unity of the Moral Consciousness of the Race

If the facts presented in this Chapter are typical, as I believe they are, they permit, as far as I can see, only one conclusion. The conscience of primitive man has the same fundamental nature and works according to the same laws as our own. His moral judgments, like ours, have their ultimate source in the impersonal desire for good, and, under specific conditions, the impersonal desire for evil; and, as with us, they vary only in

[30] This is true even of primitive society, as we are beginning to discover now that works on ethnology are being published which are the outcome of detailed and systematic study by trained experts who are intimately acquainted at first hand with the people of whom they write.

the extent to which they succeed in embodying the spirit denoted by these terms. All the original moral judgments of every human being express approbation or disapprobation of the will to produce good or evil effects. All imitative judgments must at least be such as not to conflict violently with the demands of the ideals expressed in original judgments; and their origin is traceable for the most part, or entirely to these judgments themselves. Herein consists the moral unity of the race.

But the moral consciousness of mankind is a unity in a higher and more important sense. This unity reveals itself in the fact that over and above whatever variations there may be in actual judgments, there exists a single standard valid for every human being. Even if our enumeration of the moral standards of civilized or uncivilized man should turn out to be incomplete, even if entire classes of judgments have been omitted from our list, our conclusion with regard to the existence of universal validity and the nature of the universally valid standard would remain quite unaffected. For whatever accretions may have grown up about it in the history of the race, the essence of morality consists in the assertion of the authority of the whole over the part, and of the valuable over both the valueless and the positively bad. Validity in morals consists in nothing but the consistent, or persistent holding fast to this point of view. Whatever practices, whether accompanied by some sort of approbation on the part of the agent or not, may make their appearance, must therefore be extruded if they are in conflict with it. The women of a certain Australian tribe tie a string around one finger so tightly that it stops the circulation of the blood and accordingly the outer part mortifies and ultimately falls off.[31] The women themselves, we are told, do not know why they do this. Arguing from the analogies supplied by all the really concrete and thoroughgoing studies of primitive races, we might surmise that they vaguely expect this performance in some way either to bring them good luck or to avert bad. Let us assume, however, for the sake of argument that this guess is false. Let us also assume, for the sake of argument (what apparently is not the case), that the performance is felt to be obligatory in the moral sense. On

[31] Howitt, *Native Tribes of Southeast Australia*, p. 746.

these suppositions we should here have an absolutely anomalous judgment, as far as anything presented in this book is concerned. It would still remain a fact, however, that the consistent carrying through of the principle, operative as one force among others in the moral consciousness of the Australian native as truly as in our own, that the greater good is to be chosen in preference to the less, carries with it the condemnation of all useless suffering and harmful mutilation. Accordingly, whatever may be the psychology of this practice, and of the judgment behind it, if there is any, its place is none the less outside the boundaries of valid morality. The evidence for the existence of a single valid code, and thus for the fundamental moral unity of the race, is therefore independent of the success of our attempt to draw up a complete list of the fundamental modes of applying the terms *right* and *wrong* to human actions.

## Chapter XII

# THE INFLUENCE OF AUTHORITY UPON MORAL STANDARDS

A complete account of the forces that make our judgments of right what they are, must include some estimate of the rôle of authority in the formation of such judgments. By authority I mean the opinions of those whom we regard as wiser than we. As everyone knows, it plays a very important part in determining our beliefs concerning what are commonly called "matters of fact." In most men's picture of the solar system, the earth goes round the sun simply on the word of the astronomers. Our views as to what is harmful to health are apt to be the joint product of our own experience and our respect for the medical profession or for some individual doctor. For almost every citizen of the United States the conviction that a republic is a better form of government than a monarchy is based upon the fact that everyone he is acquainted with or knows about thinks so. This leaning upon the shoulders of others is, within limits, for the great majority of the population, inevitable and desirable. Equally inevitable and desirable is the transference of the same attitude to the field of morals. As young children our parents and perhaps teachers serve as our leading experts. Then the mantle may pass to some boy three or four years older than we. Later it may be divided among several groups or classes, certain revered individuals, and the whole society of which we form a part; the last, because it is inconceivable to us that everyone, or everyone we know, should be mistaken.

This statement, as it stands, leaves ample room for the working of inner forces in the moral consciousness, for the influence of "nature", or native endowment, in determining growth, as well as "nurture", or environment. But as we learned in Chapter II, page 22, there exists a widely accepted view according to which the moral standards of the ordinary man are nothing more than

the mere product of social pressure. All the men and women about us, apart from a few exceptionally educated or gifted persons, get all their ideas of what is right and wrong from the community about them. The popular beliefs that it is wrong to murder and innocent to write with a pen in preference to a lead pencil are due to no other circumstance than the chance that we have been taught that one was wrong and have been spared the same operation with respect to the other. It would have been just as easy, however, to reverse the process and make everyone look upon writing with a pen as the sum of all villainies and murder as an innocent pastime: *and this without any changes in conceptions of cause and effect.* (See above Chapter IX, pages 148 ff.)

I have set forth this view in its extreme form, but it is no creation of my imagination. It is being diligently spread before the public by numerous sociologists, ethnologists, moralists, and many other members of the same genus. From this point opinions taper off according as less and less importance is attributed to authority. But undoubtedly a very large number of contemporary moralists stand at or close to the other end of the line.

If there is any truth in the analyses of Chapters II, III, and VII, this doctrine of the omnipotence of authority in morals represents, at the least, a gross exaggeration. But I am not willing to rest the case there. I shall attempt in this Chapter to present some direct evidence against it. Whatever this may be worth it will show, I believe, that the case for the extreme conceptions of the power of authority is not so simple as is frequently imagined.

## I

### The Teachings of Christ as an Authority in Morals

We may reasonably assume that for a genuine believer in the supernatural origin of Christianity the highest authority on morals is likely to be the teachings of Christ. We shall therefore get much light on the strength of authority as a psychological force if we watch the conflict between the precepts of the New Testament and the demands of the ordinary man's conscience at some point where the latter is a living force and not a mere dead formula. The best field for such an inquiry is offered by

the phenomena of revenge. Here there exist on the one side the express prohibitions of the Sermon on the Mount, on the other side the impulses behind the law of retaliation. Acceptance of this law, in some form or other, is, as we know, only a little short of universal.[1] Some of its demands can be treated by the sophisticating conscience, anxious to escape the shackles of authority, as outside the range of the injunctions of the Gospels. Such is retributive punishment on the part of the state. There are other forms, however, which no one will pretend to be beyond the jurisdiction of the commandment: "Love your enemies." Of this the most indisputable instance is private revenge for a wrong committed against self. It will therefore be worth while to examine the attitude of the Christian layman's conscience towards this class of actions.

The report which follows is derived from a study of the dysdemonic judgment made by my colleague, Professor Otto, and me, certain results of which were published in the *International Journal of Ethics* for April and July, 1910. The instrumentality employed was the casuistry question. The subjects consisted of 100 students in the first year of the Short Course in Agriculture in the University of Wisconsin. They were selected from a larger body of volunteers partly by the toss of a coin, partly by favoring those who reported the least amount of school attendance.

The method by which the data were obtained was as follows. We appeared before the students assembled in class, and requested their assistance in our undertaking. Mimeographed questions were then distributed, to which those who cared to help us returned answers in written form. The written work, however, was a mere device adopted in order to discover who were willing to coöperate with us, and in order to start their minds working in preparation for the real investigation that was to follow. Indeed, half the questions on the paper had nothing to do with the subject matter of the study and were inserted as a blind. The actual data were obtained in every case from an interview, sometimes from two interviews, averaging about an hour in length. It is the answers obtained in this way that form

[1] See Chapter II, page 33.

the subject matter of our report. The interview made it possible to protect investigator and student alike from mutual misunderstandings. What is equally important, it made possible the formulation of a number of secondary questions, variations on the original theme, which were of the greatest value in determining the exact attitude of the respondent towards a series of different though closely related situations.

In these interviews three fundamental problems, with their subsidiaries, were put to the subjects, the major ones having appeared on the original paper. Of these our present inquiry is concerned with only one. It reads as follows:

A certain boy came to New York from the country without money and without friends. He was soon befriended by a prosperous manufacturer who took him into his employment and into his home, and in the end, made him his partner. The new partner took advantage of his position to cheat his benefactor out of all his money, deprived him of his share in the business, and turned him out of both factory and home penniless. The manner in which this was done can be guessed from the fact that years afterwards he openly boasted of it to a certain person in such a way as to show that he considered it not only a clever trick but also a good joke. Suppose the benefactor, having no prospect before him of obtaining restitution by means of the courts, had found himself able to secure the aid of powerful influences which by withdrawing loans at a critical time could have ruined the business of the younger man, would he have been morally justified in attempting to do so? This story of ingratitude, it may be added, is true in every detail.

When this question is examined in the concrete, a number of considerations tend to enter which obscure the real issue. Thus some were led to an affirmative answer by the idea that the ruining of his business might bring about the young man's reformation; others thought it might have a good effect upon the standards of the business men of the city. Again, certain negative answers turned on the supposition that if the young man was forced into bankruptcy, innocent parties might have to suffer; still others, on the conviction that if the benefactor refrained from himself ruining his former partner, the latter would suffer none the less in this world, or at all events he would get no happiness from his ill-gotten wealth. These and other similar considerations were met by appropriate additions

to the original relation, so that the final answer in every case squarely met the point at issue. This was: Is private vengeance justified under circumstances such as those here described?

To those who repudiated retaliation a second question was presented, whenever time permitted. Unfortunately this happened in only a small minority of cases. As the present study, however, does not aim at a quantitative estimate, but rather at the determination of the existence of a certain attitude, this omission (as will appear in the course of the exposition) is not so serious as might be expected. The second question reads as follows:

> The scene is laid in the mountains of eastern Kentucky. A physician, widely beloved and trusted, who had lived his whole life in that region, had been called in to attend some men who had been seriously wounded in a blood feud. Soon after he was met on a lonely road by one of the feudists. The latter informed the physician that, in revenge for the services rendered to his enemies, he was about to kill him. The doctor pleaded for his life, not for his own sake, for he was over sixty, and, in any event, had not many more years to live, but for his wife and family. His wife was much younger than he, and his children—all daughters —were not yet grown. In reply the murderer only laughed at him, and, after rendering escape impossible with a single shot, proceeded in leisurely fashion to shoot him to pieces, making the less vital parts of the body his first target in order to lengthen his victim's agony as much as possible, jeering at him the while between the shots. Provided that conviction by a court of law was impossible, would one of his relatives be justified in avenging this death? It being distinctly understood that the return of like for like would do nothing to prevent such deeds from recurring, and, indeed, was the rather liable to call forth new ones by way of reprisal.

Both questions are required to bring out all the champions of revenge because a few persons who object to retaliation in the second instance because it involves death, will accept it in the first. On the other hand others will reject it in the first because they do not regard the crime as bad enough to justify any kind of vengeance; whereas their attitude in the second may be that of a certain thoroughgoing and staunch defender of forgiveness, who on hearing, at the end of the interview, the story of the Kentucky murder instantly exclaimed with great intensity of feeling: "The electricity chair would be too easy for him. I would give him the same as he done and a little worse."

When the casuistry questions had been put and answered the great majority of the students were asked if they believed the teachings of Christ, as recorded in the Gospels, represented an infallible revelation given to man by God. In order that none might be moved to answer in the affirmative out of deference to our supposed opinions we phrased our question in such a way as to create the presumption that we ourselves took the skeptical position; and we classified all those who did not express absolute certainty as having answered in the negative. On this basis fifty-six of these young men were counted as accepting unequivocally the divine authority of the words of Christ, and twenty-nine were placed by us in the opposite category. The attitude of the remaining fifteen we did not have time to discover. Our problem was to determine how far the members of the first group would be influenced in their judgments by Christ's condemnation of the law of retaliation.

Of the fifty-six believers, twenty-five repudiated revenge in their written answers, eleven with and fourteen without specific reference to the teachings of the New Testament. In the interviews the remaining thirty-one were placed face to face with the prohibitions of Matthew V, which they of course recognized immediately upon hearing. Thereupon fifteen of them changed their position. The remaining sixteen, however, stood unmoved. In twelve cases this attitude was a response to the story of the ruined benefactor, in four to the incident of the Kentucky feud. We found time to tell the latter story to only eight or ten of our subjects. If all could have heard it the number of those who called for vengeance on the wrong-doer would unquestionably have been greatly increased. As it is, however, the facts are sufficiently striking. Of thirty-one persons who profess to believe that the teachings of Christ are the infallible words of an omniscient God, fifty per cent refuse to change their judgments in deference to the voice of divine authority. But even this is not quite all. Of those who did change their answers, three hesitated a long time before coming to a decision, and in the end condemned revenge with a minimum of conviction. A further fact must be taken into account in gauging the strength of authority. The situation was a far more serious one for the non-believers than

for the believers. The majority of the former were either very doubtful about the existence of rewards and punishments after death, or actually disbelieved it. When they repudiated retaliation therefore they bade farewell to it forever. On the other hand, a considerable number of those who changed their opinion in the face of the scriptural prohibition demonstrably consoled themselves with the thought of the punishment reserved for miscreants of this kind in a life beyond the grave. "God will give it to him anyway," said one respondent concerning the man who ruined his benefactor, "so I say forgive him and leave him to his fate."

It may be alleged that those who refused to recant were persons whose belief in the Bible was purely nominal or who lived habitually in an atmosphere which made the Bible and its teachings mere words and nothing more. This was demonstrably untrue of at least half this number, and for aught we know may have been true of the others also. Over half of our Christian champions of the law of retaliation were interviewed twice with an interval of three to five weeks between the interviews. Several of them informed us that in this period they had thought of little else in so far as their daily work had given them an opportunity for reflection at all. One young man in particular I shall never forget. He sat before me with his head partially bowed, beads of perspiration standing on his forehead. In as many ways as my ingenuity could devise, I placed before him the incompatibility of revenge and the Sermon on the Mount. Yes, the Bible is the word of God and true from cover to cover; "but this man he had ought to be punished. I ain't got nothing to say against the Bible, but that is the way I feel." Such was his constantly reiterated reply. How his position could be reconciled with the teachings of the New Testament did not interest him in the slightest degree. He apparently thought that was my job. But he knew absolutely what was right in the premises for he had inside information.

Of the thirty-one believers who began by approving revenge, sixteen, as we have seen, stuck to their belief in the face of the demands of an authority regarded by them as infallible. But what of the twenty-five who condemned retaliation from the

start? Was their position due solely or primarily to an unquestioning submission of individual judgment to the voice of revelation? This can not be admitted for a moment. For of the twenty-nine non-believers, nine, or thirty-one per cent, disapproved of revenge also. If the same proportion had held among the fifty-six believers, we should have had seventeen who would have condemned revenge any way, quite apart from the pressure of authority. These persons would have been members of the group of twenty-five who repudiated retaliation from the start. Accordingly seventeen members of the group would be there whatever their religious beliefs, leaving only eight whose answers could be attributed primarily to the authority of the Bible. It is indeed true that our numbers are too small to serve as the basis of exact calculation. Nevertheless they justify the conclusion that there are other forces at work among those who repudiate revenge from the start, besides the voice of divine revelation.

It must not be supposed that I attach any particular value to the precise percentages at any point in this study. Not merely are the numbers with which it deals somewhat too small to be representative; what is far more significant is the fact that no single investigation, or indeed no series of investigations, could measure the power of authority in morals with complete adequacy. Authority is simply one agency among others; and its efficacy in producing conviction at any given moment will depend on the one hand upon the force with which it appeals to the mind as a living reality, and on the other hand upon the vigor of the opposing ideal. At points where men have no strong convictions of their own, or where they do not see clearly just what their own standards require, as perhaps in the matter of divorce, or where incompatible ideals such as forgiveness and retaliation appeal with approximately equal strength to different sides of their nature, there the Bible may decide the issue. But where a man's own ideals are clear or deeply rooted in his character, its claim to the right to determine the judgment will often be repudiated, either consciously or unconsciously.

### The Influence of Authority upon Children's Moral Ideals

Every conclusion drawn from the preceding examination might be admitted and the claim still urged that, after all, the great bulk or even the whole body of our moral judgments has its source in authority of some sort. The child, it may be said, gets his standards from the community in which he grows up. As the twig is bent the tree's inclined. It may indeed be true that when he reaches man's estate he is not greatly influenced by a revelation from another world. But the time for that is past. And the reason is that he has already been so completely shaped by one set of authorities that he is no longer capable of being moulded by another, however powerful it may be in itself.

In 1894 Professor Dewey published an article which ought to have served as the foundation for all later discussion of this subject. It appeared in Volume 45 of the *Popular Science Monthly,* and was called "The Chaos in Moral Training." He asked each of the hundred students in his introductory ethics class, "to state some typical early moral experience of his own, relating, say, to obedience, honesty, and truthfulness, and the impression left by the outcome upon his own mind, especially his impression as to the reason for the virtue in question." On the theory that the mind is a *tabula rasa,* commands issued by parents to a young child—unless one parent contradicts another, or some other authority intervenes—should be regarded as *ipso facto* right, and the infliction of punishment for disobedience as justified. In reality Professor Dewey's returns tell a very different story.

> "A sense of injustice seems to have been the first distinctly moral feeling aroused in many. This, not on account of the wrong that the child did others, but of wrong suffered in being punished for something which seemed perfectly innocent to the child. One of the distinctly painful impressions left on my own mind by the papers is the comparative frequency with which parents assumed that an act is consciously wrong and punish it as such, when in the child's mind it is simply psychological—based, I mean, upon ideas and emotions which under the circumstances are natural."

Here "natural" can only mean, looked upon by the child with-

out disapprobation; at least the facts themselves require this interpretation.

This statement does not refer to the sense of injustice which certain students report when they were punished for something they did not do, or which they did not know was contrary to the parental will, or where they were punished for something they could not help, such as the results of an accident. Accounts of these incidents of course appear, but they are not the striking feature of this collection of confessions. The significant fact is that the word of command issuing from an authority may or may not be regarded as representing the demands of the moral law, and very frequently is not.

A number of years ago I obtained from my students about 125 similar papers which are still in my possession. They took the form of answers to the following question: "Give an account of some early punishment which you remember with fair definiteness and completeness, and state its effects upon you, and your attitude or feeling at the time towards the person who punished you." Here again a considerable majority of the replies reveal a repudiation of the authority of the parent on the part of the child at the time of the command, and a vivid resentment at the use of punishment for refusal to obey, together with a rankling sense of injustice after the punishment had been inflicted. They show the youthful member of the *genus homo* weighing his parents' deeds in the balance and finding them wanting, with much the same freedom that these parents allow themselves in reference to his shortcomings. Recognition of the justice of the command and of the punishment following disobedience of course also occurs. Such replies might be ambiguous, for they might not tell us whether the command was accepted by the child because it was commanded, or because, apart from all command, it appealed to him as just. In fact, however, many of the papers are unexpectedly enlightening at this point also, and yield information which is quite out of touch with the prevailing views on this subject.

These contentions I shall try to justify, by presenting a few specimen answers taken from my collection.

1. A boy who lived on the shores of a lake was forbidden to go near the water. He disobeyed, was caught and thrashed.

"After the pain had subsided, I began to think, and to say the least, my attitude was a revengeful one. '*Why* shouldn't I go to the lake if I want to?' I argued. 'What if I *do* fall in? I can swim, and I'm not hurting anyone—least of all myself.'"

2. A girl reports a similar situation and an identical reaction.

"During my childhood I was very fond of sitting by the water and would watch the waves by the hour. My father had placed a new boat on the river and had anchored it near my favorite spot. It was a temptation. My father had forbidden me to meddle with the boat, but I could not resist. I entered the boat and enjoyed the new sensation so much that I climbed into it every day until I was discovered. This resulted in a whipping, and in being sent to bed without supper. I spent the whole night in weeping, since I thought myself cruelly wronged, saying to myself *'I did not hurt the old boat'*" (italics as in the original).

3. A young man writes:

"My early punishments were often misplaced, which detracted considerably from their good effects. I often did abominable things for which I was not punished at all, and was spanked for offenses which seemed to me trivial. The earliest spanking of which I have any recollection took place when I was five years old. When out playing one day with a lot of little boys who were in the habit of using naughty words, I followed their example and told my little brother to go to the devil. The spanking which I received caused in me only feelings of the deepest resentment and rebellion. But it was a long time before I used the expression again."

4. In the following paper a woman student tells how she applied the principle of the greater good in her childhood.

"As children my brothers and I had to perform certain definite duties. They carried wood and water and I had to wash the dishes and pare potatoes in the morning before I went to school. When I was ten years old I learned to ride horseback and I was allowed to go out riding at any time that it did not interfere with my work. Four or five other girls in the village rode horseback and they went out just the time I had to wash dishes after tea. . . . I used to think that since dish washing was such a task for me and so slight a thing for my mother to do, I ought to be relieved."

In these instances we find children weighing values, in the imperfect way, to be sure, in which a child's mind might be ex-

pected to work, but nevertheless *weighing values;* and reacting vigorously against the infliction of negative values when the situation, in their opinion, did not justify it; all this in defiance of the moral judgments of their parents. In the following paper, however, we find an illustration of the traditional theory—an act is wrong because forbidden and for no other reason. The writer is a man.

5. "The earliest punishment that I can remember with any distinctness at all is the time my mother washed my tongue with red cast-steel soap for persistently using the slang expression of 'by golly' . . . For a very long time after I had the idea that the expression 'by Golly' was extremely wicked. Very much stronger language never seemed to me to be quite as bad as 'by Golly.' "

This fits perfectly the theory that a child has no moral nature of his own, but can be made to accept anything as wrong, however preposterous it may be, if his parents tell him it is wrong. Unfortunately for the theory, however, it is the only example of this type in my collection of 125 reports. I shall return to it later.

6. In the next paper we see again a parent's judgment accepted in the end—but on the basis of an insight into its reasonableness on the part of the child.

"The first severe punishment that I remember receiving occurred to me when I was about seven years of age. I had stolen away from home one morning and in company with a number of other boys, went to a pond on the outskirts of the city in order to go swimming. I had been cautioned never to go to the pond in question and when I made known where I had been upon my arrival home that evening I received the severe punishment referred to above. I was whipped severely and compelled to stay in the house for one week. This punishment seemed to me to be most unjust particularly because I thought that I had done no wrong. I thought of this some time and the more that I thought of it the more convinced I was that I had been treated unjustly. A month after our neighborhood was shocked by the sudden death of one of the younger members of the community who had been drowned in the same pond that I had been punished for going to. From that time on I could see plainly that the punishment that was inflicted upon me was perfectly just, to say the least, and from that time I was more than glad to listen to my parents' commands."

7. The next, written by a woman, tells essentially the same story. She recognizes childish pertness as wrong, not as the result

of an unreasoned *ipse dixit* backed by force, but in consequence of the discovery that it hurt her parents' feelings.

"I cannot remember being whipped in my childhood except for talking back to my parents. It was a long time before I could see that I could not say anything to them that they could say to me. I could not see why it was wrong. When they did make me see that it hurt them, that it made them feel bad, then I was sorry. They never made me see it by whipping me but by talking and explaining things to me."

8. The following statement, contributed by a man, points the way to parents who wish to arouse a solid and lasting confidence in the soundness of their moral judgment.

"My parents never punished me in anger, and it was a strict rule with my mother never to punish me without being sure that I understood just why she was doing so. How very strict this rule was may be shown by the fact that on one occasion when as she punished me in somewhat of a hurry and I asked her afterward what it was all about, she was almost heartbroken to think that I had had to suffer without knowing the reason. The result was that I always had a different view of punishment, I think, from that held by most children. Of course, I never welcomed it; but it never made me sullen or resentful towards my parents."

These papers represent fairly, I believe, the leading types of answers to my questions. There are indeed a good many so indefinite in content that nothing whatever can be learned from them. There are also a few of the following kind:

9. "When I was a child I used to love to help my father harness and hitch the horses. One day he sent me to bring a certain part of the harness. It was heavy and I dragged it in the dust, but when he asked me about it, I denied it. Of course he was able to prove to me that I had and to make me confess the truth. He told me what a small offense I had done by dragging the harness, but he appeared very much displeased at my denial of it. He sent me into the house and would not allow me to be with him the rest of the morning. This punishment made a deep impression upon my mind. I felt that it was a just thing to do and the best thing under the circumstances."

This type of reply can of course give aid and comfort to either theory, as we are not supplied with enough information to know why the lie was recognized as wrong. Most of the answers, however, as far as essentials are concerned, are quite unambiguous. This is particularly true of the large number written by those

that feel a bitter sense of injustice when punished for disobedience to a parental command for which they could not discover a reason; that is, if anything in this book is true, a value gained, or harm avoided for someone.

In all these papers, over a hundred in number, only one incident is narrated which suggests blind veneration of authority as such. It is that of the boy whose mother washed his tongue with "cast-steel" soap in order to break up the habit of saying "By Golly." However, even our one apparent exception can be brought into line by making two assumptions, both intrinsically reasonable, though unfortunately not verified at the time. One is that the boy had been taught that profanity grieves God, just as pertness may grieve a parent.[2] The other is that "By Golly," perhaps because it began with "G," came in some confused way to be associated with profanity, first in the mind of the mother and then of the son. In the days when the saloon was one of our great national institutions an ardent member of the Women's Christian Temperance Union forbade her youthful son to drink soda water because it foamed at the top of the glass like beer. If the human mind is capable of a flight of this sort it ought to be able to suspect an identity between "God" and "Golly."

Here, then, are two reports made by over 200 students of the University of Chicago and the University of Wisconsin. What do they show? Certainly this, that the mind of the child is no mere sheet of paper upon which age may write what characters it wills. As far as they go, they confirm the doctrine set forth by implication in the preceding Chapters of this book. Authority, it seems clear, has to deal from the start with a being possessing a definite, even though a very incomplete moral equipment; a being who at six years of age is quite capable of reproaching his father with the words, spoken or unspoken: "It isn't fair for you to whip me for doing something, and then do it yourself"; a being, that is to say, who has within him the beginnings of an ideal of human conduct as a consequence of the working of the inherent forces of his own mind and who will not hesitate to use it as a standard of criticism. This ideal is inchoate, superficial, erratic at times in its reactions, but a living organism none the

[2] See above, Chapter II, page 35.

less. When it is appealed to in ways which he can at least faintly understand the child responds, not necessarily with obedience but with inner acquiescence. When the command fails to awaken an answering echo within the mind, and at the same time attempts to inhibit some strong impulse, he responds also, but this time with a feeling of burning injustice. Authority is thus not a God which creates something out of nothing. This seems certain. Moreover the facts at present at our disposal appear to warrant a farther conclusion. Authority is capable of producing moral conviction, whether in children or in adults, only in so far as its pronouncements are in substantial harmony with, or at least not greatly out of harmony with the moral nature of him whom it addresses. Its power is greatest in matters upon which the conscience of the individual speaks in vague or doubtful tones, whether because of indifference, ignorance, or want of insight. But it counts for little where conscience is alert, active, clear-sighted, and emotionally aroused.

## II

### The Alleged Immediacy of Lay Moral Judgments

The belief that moral judgments are the product chiefly or entirely of authority is largely due, I think, to two opinions, one of them containing a large element of truth, as far as the facts are concerned, the other a matter for inquiry. Ignoring the first for the present, the second affirms the immediacy of the layman's judgments of right and wrong. *Immediacy* means that the judgments in questions are not based upon the perception of the relation of the action to any kind of value, that is to say, to good or evil. It excludes the eudemonic and dysdemonic judgments, which express our attitudes towards extrinsic values, and in effect, the æsthetic and antipathetic judgments, which do the same thing for intrinsic values. With the element of value entirely eliminated, no alternative seems open to moralists of our day but to attribute the judgment to some external agency such as authority.

I have tried to show in Chapters II and III that the average

judgments of the average layman are not explicable on this theory; that when we study his attitude towards a concrete breach of the rule of veracity, contracts, respect for property, etc., we see that it is determined by a more or less clear perception of the relation of the action to the welfare of some person or group of persons thereby affected. I have made a detailed examination of these phenomena, the results of which were published in the monograph several times referred to, *The Influence of Custom on the Moral Judgment,* and have been led by it to the same conclusion. As I have already said [3] I do not mean that the layman carries around in his head a formula representing the utilitarian standard; any more than a man who looks for a cause when his fountain pen refuses to flow need ever to have said to himself: "Every event must have a cause, and under the same circumstances the same cause must have the same effect." What I do mean by the denial of immediacy is that (confining our attention for the sake of simplicity to the eudemonic judgment) when a man sees harm willed in a particular case he tends to call that action wrong; in so far as he sees good willed, he tends to call it right; when he sees no appreciable connection with good or harm he regards the action as morally indifferent. Judgments of the kind described in Chapter II, page 28, I should call fundamentally eudemonic rather than immediate.

I do not categorically deny the possibility of immediacy, or even the existence of a certain amount of it, although I myself have never seen a moral judgment which I could be sure was entirely unrelated to any value whatever. I assert merely that in my opinion the evidence proves conclusively that immediacy can not account for all the layman's judgments, or even the majority of them; and that the only extensive examination with which I am acquainted (the one just referred to) seems to show it to be a distinctly subordinate if not a vanishingly small factor. Immediacy can not be used to support a theory of the dominance of authority until it has been shown to be itself a fact, and something more than a sporadic fact at that.

[3] Chapter II, page 30, and Chapter IV, page 49.

### Australian Marriage Barriers as a Test Case of the Doctrine of Immediacy

In what I have just written I have been thinking of the moral standards of the civilized races. But I am ready to go farther. I feel prepared to make essentially the same assertion with regard to that part of the field where authority is supposed to celebrate its greatest triumphs. It is considered today the mark of an educated man—one who is emancipated from the trammels of outworn traditions—to know that primitive morality is purely blind, that it consists in unquestioning obedience to the authority of the community or certain of its members, as the chiefs, or old men, or the gods. In the last Chapter we studied the leading forms of primitive morality in so far as they differ from our own; and we saw, I trust, that the facts are quite otherwise. The main differences between primitive moral standards and ours, as I tried to show, are due to differences in the workings of benevolence, operating in part under circumstances unlike those in which we ourselves live. The same thing could be easily shown for most of the secondary differences. There are, however, certain approved practices which at first sight seem explicable only as blind obedience to a senseless rule. It may be desirable to make some study of these phenomena. If so it will be necessary to confine attention to a single case, in order that we may see it as an integral part of a way of living. Precisely the trouble with our conceptions of primitive morality has been that they have been nothing better than abstract notions, deriving their character from a failure to look at the facts in their relation to the concrete needs and circumstances of savage life as the savage himself sees them. I will accordingly select one of the most extreme instances with which I am acquainted, and in presenting it in its setting try to show whether it is or is not so senseless that obedience can only be called blind.

Among the native races of Australia there exists a system of marriage restrictions which have been shown by Professor A. R. Radcliffe-Brown to be everywhere identical in principle, however they may differ in certain details from one locality to another. It will be advantageous to examine them as they appear in their

concreteness in some one territory. I will accordingly select certain tribes of central Australia, of which the Arunta are the classical type specimen, and will describe, as far as space will permit, their laws concerning prohibited degrees.

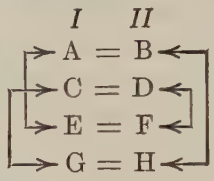
The entire membership of the tribe, male and female alike, is divided into eight classes, which it will be convenient to designate by the letters of the alphabet from A to H inclusive. It must be said by way of introduction that half of them, in our nomenclature, A, C, E, G, belong to one-half or "moiety" of the tribe and the rest to the other half; and this line of division appears to antedate the present class system, and in any event has considerable significance for their life today. Thus when the members of the tribe come together for one of their festivals, which may occupy several months, the males of A, C, E, and G, and their families camp together, while the members of the second moiety place their camp at some little distance from the other.

The essential feature of the Arunta marriage laws is that a man of class A may marry only a woman of a single class, which I shall call B, and *vice versa*. If he runs away with a married woman of B, this is a matter that concerns solely the two male members of the triangle. If the husband is strong enough and interested enough to get her back with the assistance of a few of his fellows, he may. Otherwise, he will have to go without. But if a man should marry an unmarried woman of the wrong class the whole tribe would be up in arms against him at once. He and his bride would immediately take to the bush as a matter of course, since they would know that they were letting loose a tornado; and the tribe would send out one expedition after another to find them, almost certainly keeping it up until in the end the guilty parties were caught and killed. It is true that since girls are betrothed in early infancy, or even—contingently—before birth, the woman in the case is almost certainly the promised property of another man. However this is obviously not the essential feature of the crime. For a people that are quite unconcerned at the theft of a wife are not likely to be moved to unite in inflicting the death penalty merely by the breaking up of a betrothal.

Thus nothing could seem more blind and irrational than the

Arunta attitude towards this apparently venial offense. Nevertheless when it is examined in its context it may look quite otherwise.

The Arunta, as has been said, are divided into eight groups or classes, in some one of which every male or female member of the tribe has a place automatically assigned to him by birth. The principles on which this assignment operates will appear from the accompanying diagram.




In it the sign = means "marries"; and the lines with arrowheads connect the classes of father and child, whether male or female. Thus a member of A (male or female) marries a member of B, and B only; and a member of B, in like manner, is restricted to the men or women of A. If such a person, whom we may call simply A, is a male, his children, both male and female, will belong to Class E. Male C marries female D. Their children are G. Similarly the children of E are A, and those of G are C. In moiety II, however, the arrangement is a little different. The children of a male B are H, and those of a male D are F, and *vice versa*.

The first thing to notice about this classification is that every one of a man's relations has a place in it, definitely and eternally fixed by the facts of consanguinity. If you are a male of Class A your father and his brothers and sisters are E; so also are your children. Your mother and her brothers and sisters are F. Your own brothers and sisters are A. Your cross-cousins, *i.e.*, the children of your mother's brother and your father's sister—a very important relationship—are D. Your parallel cousins, *i.e.*, the children of your father's brother and your mother's sister, are A. Your wife and your brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law are B. Your father-in-law, perhaps the most important of your relatives, is H; while your mother-in-law is of course G. Since your daughter is E your son-in-law must be F; and their children D. Your son's children, on the other hand, are A.

In the second place you address every member of a given class of the same sex and the same generation, that is to say either your own generation, or your father's, or your son's, as the case may be, by the same name. Your father, for example, you call *oknia.* But your paternal uncle and every other male member of E of your father's generation, you will also call *oknia.* Your son is *allira.* So are all male members of E in this generation. Every male E is thus either your *oknia* or your *allira.* Your wife's father is *ikuntera;* so is for you every male H in his generation. In the literature of the subject the former are commonly called actual father or father-in-law, and the latter, tribal or class fathers or fathers-in-law. In the interest of simplicity, however, I shall mark the distinction by the absence and presence, respectively, of quotation marks.

How this system of naming and classifying ever arose I shall not here undertake to inquire. What we are interested in is the results it produces in the lives of the natives, the present-day significance which it has for them. This is set forth in a series of propositions laid down by one of the most distinguished of the younger generations of ethnologists, Professor A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, as a summary of his study of this same system in a West Australian tribe, the Kariera. He has shown, by a very thoroughgoing analysis, that the same system operates throughout all parts of Australia concerning which we have any information. His propositions apply, therefore, to the Arunta in the center of the continent as completely as to the Kariera on the West Coast.

"(1) The relationship system of the Kariera tribe is not only a system of names or terms of address, but is preëminently a system of reciprocal rights and duties. A man owes the same duties (though not in the same degree) to all the persons to whom he applies the same term. Thus the relationship system regulates the whole social life of the people.

"(2) It is based on actual relations of consanguinity and affinity that can be traced by means of the genealogical knowledge preserved by the old men and women.

"(3) The recognition of relationship is so extended that everyone with whom an individual comes in contact in the ordinary course of social life is his relative. It is impossible for a man to have any social relations with any one who is not his relative because there is no stand-

ard by which two persons in this position can regulate their conduct towards one another. I am compelled to treat a person differently according as he is my 'brother,' 'brother-in-law,' 'father' or 'uncle.' If I do not know which of these he is, all intercourse is impossible." [4]

Our chief source of information about the aborigines of central Australia is the works of Messrs. Spencer and Gillen; in particular *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* (1899), and *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia* (1904). The first of the above propositions is written over every page of these famous books, and that although the authors themselves are only half aware of the significance of the facts which they report. The detailed demonstration of this fact for the Arunta tribe would require more space than I have at my disposal. I shall therefore be compelled to refer the reader to the original sources for the concrete data on which my assertion is based, and content myself in this place with a bare summary of a part of the findings.

The most important event in the life of an Arunta youth is his initiation into the tribe, an elaborate ceremonial from the natives' point of view, lasting through a number of days. From start to finish almost every move is in the hands of a member or members of some specified class. The first step may serve as an illustration, since it is quite typical. When the great day has arrived the boy is seized without warning and carried off to the ceremonial ground by three young men. One of these is his "older brother," that is to say a member of A, if the initiate is an A; the others are a "brother-in-law" B and a "cross-cousin," D. This service, it must be noted, confers a certain distinction upon those persons which they regard as a privilege, of which therefore they would not willingly be deprived. And if tradition demands the performance of these functions by representatives of just these classes, then we may be sure (though we are not expressly so informed) that the attainment of the end for which these rites are performed is for the native mind absolutely dependent upon exact conformity to the rules laid down by the wisdom of the ancestors. This end is no in-

[4] "Three Tribes of Western Australia," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute,* Vol. 43, 1913, p. 157.

significant matter; on the contrary it is the making of a man fit to play his part in the life of the tribe out of an unformed boy.

After manhood comes marriage, though not so early as among most primitive peoples. The fundamental need of the family will be food, and this is supplied in accordance with the principle of the division of labor. The woman gathers roots and catches the smaller animals; the man hunts for the larger game. The woman's contributions belong to the family alone; but the man's must be divided according to a somewhat elaborate system. When the hunter brings in his kill, he must find out whether any of his "fathers-in-law" (older generation of H) need food. If so he must first distribute certain portions to them. Then he may supply himself, his children, and his wife. Then he must distribute what he does not immediately need to his "sisters' children" (younger generation of H), then to his "mothers-in-law" (G), then to his "maternal grandmothers" (C); finally to the actual father of his actual mother-in-law (a member of C). "The association," write Spencer and Gillen, "is clearly between the man and what we may call his wife's side of the tribe." His contributions are, in part at least, apparently regarded as a form of bride price. "This giving away of food according to well established rules is not a custom more honored in the breach than the observance, but is actually carried out." [5] As the other side of this obligation, A must not eat food cooked or killed by any of the above enumerated persons. It is always his duty to serve them; therefore he must not accept services of this kind from them.

As a member of a race endowed with little mechanical ability, A's property is extremely small in amount, although what he has is, I suppose, as precious to him as ours is to us. Real property he does not own, since the land on which he lives and hunts belongs to the "local group," a division of the tribe. Among the most valued forms of personal property is hair, which is used for waist girdles. For this he must look, in the main, to three sources: his actual mother-in-law, who furnishes him his chief supply from his childhood; his "sons-in-law" (F) and his

[5] *Native Tribes of Central Australia*, pp. 469, 470.

"brothers-in-law" (B). If he is the oldest son he inherits, in addition, his father's hair which is cut from the latter's head at death. Everything else which he gets by way of inheritance comes to him not from his father, actual or class, but from his "fathers-in-law" (H).

One of the most elaborate systems of rites and duties in central Australian tribes is that which has to do with death. "In order to gratify the spirit of the dead" the deceased must be properly buried and properly mourned. These ceremonials are too complicated for description here; but the essential feature is that definite functions are distributed with the utmost precision to men and women of certain classes. The period of mourning lasts from twelve to eighteen months; its initial obligations will serve as the key to the remainder. The older A's of his own generation (his older "brothers" and "sisters"), all the E's, male and female (the class containing his "fathers" and "sons"), all female members of F (his "mothers"), and of G (his "mothers-in-law"), must never mention his name and may not go near his grave after the burial ceremony. Particular obligations rest upon his "sons-in-law" (F). They must never mention his name; they must not attend the funeral; nor do they take any part in the subsequent mourning ceremonies which are carried on at the grave. The reason for these forbearances is throughout the same and is very simple. They are such as would characterize anyone who was completely prostrated by grief. In addition, a positive duty is laid upon the "sons-in-law"; they must cut themselves vigorously on the shoulders with their flint knives as a sign of sorrow. Thus does the Australian "black fellow" seek to satisfy the universal craving to be remembered and mourned when the place which has known him shall know him no more.

Death carries with it another obligation of the highest importance. A native always dies, we remember, as the result of the magic spells of some enemy. If the medicine man can discover the identity of the murderer, it then becomes necessary to form an avenging party. This must be led by an actual son-in-law. On the other hand, curiously enough, when attempting restitution of rights, as in recovering a run-away wife, those to whom

he must look for assistance are his "brothers" (A), and his "cross cousins" (D).

These, then, are some of the duties the locus of which is determined by the Australian class system. They form only a small proportion of the total number; but for the remainder, I must refer the reader to the original source.[6] If we note that my duties towards you are your rights as against me, we shall see that the system consists of a great network of reciprocal rights and duties, in which what the individual shall do and what he shall receive are alike mapped out for him, at the most important points, down to minute details.

Now it is obvious that the preservation of the system rests upon the observance of the marriage regulations. Suppose, for example, that A marries G instead of B. Then the expectation of the males of H and the females of G that they will be the recipients of certain services as "parents-in-law" will be defeated, while others, the males of C and the females of D will be correspondingly oversupplied. If the children of this marriage are still counted as E their duties to their maternal grandmother will have to be paid to D instead of G. No one can tell who their cross cousins are; for if reckoned through the father, they would be D as before; but if they are to be the children of the mother's "brother," one of your "key" relatives, they would be C. Clearly a considerable number of infringements upon the rules, especially if carried on through two or more generations, would wreck the whole scheme. It matters not how this beautifully ordered structure was brought into existence, whether its creaters foresaw the nature of what they were building or not. Here it is as a fact, and its destruction would mean moral anarchy. Thus he who marries outside of his class is guilty of the unpardonable sin; he has done his part to undermine the foundations on which rest practically all the moral obligations which are recognized by his race.

"The ancient Greeks," says Schmidt, "had a very hazy notion of the existence of obligations to human beings as such."[7] This

[6] See in particular, Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes of Central Australia*, Chs. VII, XII, XIII, and XIV.

[7] *Die Ethik der alten Griechen*, Vol. II, p. 323.

statement holds in the main, as we learned in the last Chapter, for most primitive peoples. It is eminently true of Australia.

"With the help of the genealogical knowledge of the older men and women it is possible to trace out some relationship, however distant it may be, between any two members of the same tribe [and not infrequently between members of different tribes]. When a stranger comes to a camp that he has never visited before, he does not enter the camp, but remains at some distance. A few of the older men, after a while, approach him, and the first thing they proceed to do is to find out who the stranger is. The commonest question that is put to him is, 'Who is your *maeli* [father's father]?' The discussion proceeds on genealogical lines until all parties are satisfied of the exact relation of the stranger to each of the natives present in the camp. When this point is reached the stranger can be admitted to the camp and the different men and women are pointed out to him and their relation to him defined. I watched two or three of these discussions in Western Australia. I took with me on my journey a native of the Talainji tribe, and at each native camp we came to, the same process had to be gone through. In one case, after a long discussion, they were still unable to discover any traceable relationship between my servant and the men of the camp. That night my 'boy' refused to sleep in the native camp, as was his usual custom, and on talking to him I found that he was frightened. These men were not his relatives and they were therefore enemies. This represents the real feeling of the natives on the matter. If I am a black fellow and meet another black fellow, that other must be either my relative or my enemy." [8]

This is said of the Kariera, but it holds without exception for every Australian tribe. Seen in the light of this statement these marriage regulations are simply one more expression of tribal morality. You owe duties only to your own kin. The Australian system determines who your kin are, distributes the consequent obligations, and guards the corresponding rights.

In all this there is undoubtedly an arbitrary element. Whether you ought to supply food first to your mother-in-law and then

[8] A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, "Three Tribes of Western Australia," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 43, p. 151.

to your maternal grandmother, or the reverse, is a matter which can never be decided by pure reason. But the fundamentals of the system are not arbitrary. Morality has to do with the distribution of good things, or values; and the Australian class system provides a set of precise canons or rules of service. This service concerns, among other things, matters so vital as the food supply, so vehemently desired as assistance in executing vengeance, so universally longed for as signs of sorrow and respect at death. The actual pattern is doubtless artificial in that the various rights and duties might have been arranged otherwise and have produced equally good results. But it is capable of rational justification; first, because it deals with the distribution of values, and secondly, because it actually operates to distribute them satisfactorily.

I have tried to show that what appears, when looked at in the abstract, to be a senseless mass of meticulous regulations, turns out, when examined in its relation to the concrete life of which it is an integral part, to be the very foundation of social existence. These marriage regulations thus have a maximum of utility for the Australian native. Is he himself conscious of this utility? If you ask him why A must marry B, he will answer "because our fathers did"; and many moralists have assumed this disposes of the matter. But in the first place their old men have been found deliberating about changes of custom, so that the possibility of doing things differently from what their fathers did has occurred to their minds, and, what is more, has been acted upon. Moreover, they have before them in their folklore pictures of the customs of their ancestors which are radically different, at many important points, from those which they themselves practice. In the second place it is an ethnological law, which holds with either insignificantly few or no exceptions, that primitive peoples punish as a group only when each member feels himself personally endangered by the offense. Hence we are justified in inferring that the native sees in a breach of the marriage laws an injury to the vital interests of the tribe and thus to himself. Finally the notion that savages are too stupid to see these utilities, belongs, I think, to an outworn ethnology. The investigators who know him at first hand will tell you that

while primitive man may be unable to grasp many things which interest you, he is usually quite capable of seeing anything that really interests him. And to the Australian native hardly anything is so interesting as kinship.*

## How Far Have Group Uniformities Their Source in Authority?

A second reason for regarding authority as a leading factor in the formation of moral standards is the uniformity which obtains in the moral ideas of individual groups, such as tribes or nations, compared with the profound differences often found between group and group. It is easy to attribute these phenomena to the authority of public opinion within the group and let it go at that. So this is precisely what a great many moralists have done.

Before examining this explanation it will perhaps be advisable to remind the reader once more of the distinction between inner and outer morality. The latter, as may be remembered, resolves itself chiefly into a matter of opinion about the effects of action.[9] It might prove interesting to analyze the power of authority to determine ideas of cause and effect; but such an inquiry would lead too far away from the proper problems of ethics. I shall therefore confine myself to a study of the rôle of authority in shaping judgments upon volitions.

Every moral judgment contains two elements: an intellectual and a "volitional." [10] Right represents the way we want human beings as such to treat each other. Often we do not know what we want, *i.e.* what will really satisfy our desires.[11] Knowledge of what we want involves the activity of the intellect. Besides this, there is the desire itself from which the knowledge as to what will satisfy it must start and with which it must end. This is the volitional factor. With it our analysis of the phenomena of group uniformity will do best to begin.

1. The forms taken by benevolence and malevolence may

* See Notes, XII, "The Source of the Australian Class System," p. 506.
[9] See above, Chapter IX, page 148.
[10] See below, Chapter XXI, page 451.
[11] See above, Chapter VII, page 111.

vary from race to race and even from tribe to tribe as the result of the workings of heredity. The variations in benevolence may consist of differences in its sensitiveness to the appeal of human welfare under varying conditions, or differences in the extent to which it is affected by the stimulants and depressants enumerated in Chapter V. A parallel statement could easily be formulated for malevolence.

Heredity may enter in a second way. Eudemonic judgments demand a volition directed to the attainment of the good. But again as a matter of native endowment there may be great differences in tastes and interests as between race and race and tribe and tribe. An illustration of this fact is the varying value attributed to conjugal affection in different parts of the world, although environmental forces undoubtedly enter as determinants also. Judgments of value, as we have seen, profoundly affect standards of right and wrong.[12]

The members of a race or tribe are likely to have, to a considerable extent, a common ancestry. Hence many uniformities in moral judgments are due to nothing more recondite than community of blood.

2. The actual workings of benevolence and malevolence and their stimulants and depressants are subject to the influence of a large number of conditions. Where these conditions are uniform the results tend to be uniform also. The network of forces which produce the phenomena of tribal morality will serve as an illustration.

3. The facts noted in the preceding paragraph point to the existence of potentialities which may or may not be realized, according as circumstances are favorable or otherwise. An important circumstance is the desires and emotions of those about us. Fear, anger, and disgust are notoriously contagious. Benevolence and malevolence may perhaps not be equally mobile, but the undoubted and extensive influence of example is in part a consequence and thus a proof of capacity for being moved; and this statement applies not merely to the action for which they serve as motives, but also to the judgments of which they are the source.

[12] See above, Chapter XI, pp. 197-201.

4. Professor Seelye, the historian, has packed into a single sentence more insight into these phenomena than will commonly be found elsewhere in whole chapters. "Custom," he writes, "dulls the sensibilities and puts the critical faculty to sleep." [13] Here we come upon one of the most striking paradoxes in morals. Custom means a mode of action common to a group of persons; and the paradox lies in the fact that these modes of external action can affect men's *ideals* of action, what *is* producing an idea of what *ought to be*. We shall begin by considering the effects upon the sensibilities.

As we saw in Chapter V we tend to grow callous to the sufferings of others when they are too continuously before our eyes, especially when we do nothing to prevent or relieve them. Hence we tend to grow callous also to the *infliction* of suffering, at least where we ourselves are not the victims. The number of possible illustrations is legion. We remember the experience of the boy who on entering an English public school was intensely wrought up by the sight of flogging, but later came to watch it with actual amusement. To most people of English race the bull-fight is a revolting spectacle, as seen for the first time. But an American woman who has a husband infatuated with the sport, and who considers it desirable to accompany him to the bull ring, informs me that although at first she found the spectacle almost intolerable, now after witnessing some thirty or forty performances, she has lost entirely her former feeling of repugnance, and on the whole, rather enjoys it.

5. "Custom puts the critical faculty to sleep." What we are used to tends to be taken as a matter of course and more or less completely ignored. How many persons ever ask themselves why the sun rises and sets; or, if you prefer, why the earth turns on its axis? Similarly, who raises the question of the rights of animals when ordering beefsteak for dinner? Mr. J. A. Thayer, a pioneer in the field of honest advertising, once wrote under the name of a friend, the following letter to Mr. Robert Collier, then proprietor and editor of *Collier's Weekly:* "I see *Collier's* every week, and find in it patent medicine and other advertise-

[13] *Ecce Homo,* p. 214.

ments which the *Ladies' Home Journal* and the *Delineator* do not insert. Why do you accept such advertising? I am sure you do not need the money." In a very short time he received the following reply from Mr. Collier himself: "Upon receipt of your letter I called our advertising staff together, and we have decided, as soon as certain contracts are completed, to discontinue the insertion of such advertising." [14] Mr. Collier was a business man of very high character who had adopted certain practices of the day without thinking anything about their morality one way or the other till challenged by a more penetrating or more reflective mind. Many people think in ruts formed for them largely by others; and much of the time they do not think consecutively at all, except as some disturber of the peace comes along and wakes them from their dogmatic slumber.

6. If the critical faculty does wake up, it may be restored to its normal state by any one of several soothing considerations. Here are the two that are most effective.

*a.* What everybody does repeatedly and openly, everybody must regard as at least innocent if not positively right. But it is impossible that everyone should be mistaken. Therefore in the field of conduct at least, whatever is, is right.

*b.* Present institutions and modes of action may not be entirely satisfactory, but any change might turn out in the end to be a change for the worse. We shall therefore do best to stand by the old and tried ways.

These are not the only forces tending to produce uniformity of standard within a group, but as far as I can see they are the most important ones. Among them we find authority in one of its embodiments, namely public opinion, whether expressing itself in actions (6*a*), or more explicitly in actual judgments. There are other vehicles of authority—the prophet (major or minor) of some new dispensation, or more narrowly of some new attitude towards human rights, and the gods, or God. The former is apt to lead not to conformity, but to variation from type; the latter may be conservative or radical in influence as circumstances may determine. Thus we reach the position of an earlier

[14] J. A. Thayer, *Astir, A Publisher's Life Story*, p. 205.

page. Authority is a real force in the determination of moral judgments; but it is far from being the sole agency responsible for the observable distribution of moral ideals.

### Is Authority a Creative Factor in Morals?

Furthermore, it seems indisputable that authority has introduced into the code of the race little that is new or different from what would otherwise have been there. Its rôle has been that of diffusion rather than of creation. In the old days when the mere word "evolution" acted like champagne, it used to be alleged that all our moral standards had their source in the commands of an egoistic ruler. If this meant that a complete egoist by bullying his fellow egoists could in some way evoke standards of morality, I have said all that I intend to on the subject in Chapters V and VI. If, however, the picture before the mind was that of an average primitive community where by the side of much egoism there dwells a not inconsiderable amount of genuine altruism, then any modifications which a chief or a ruling class might feel moved to introduce into the moral code of the community would have to run two gauntlets: first, that of the ruler's own conscience; second, that of the conscience of his subjects. Of the latter, I have spoken at sufficient length. The former is not to be ignored, as it is usually. It tends, at least, to limit the prescriptions of autocracy within the bounds of apparent fairness. This seems to be the explanation of the empirically observable fact that the moral judgments of the race do not take on an indefinite variety of forms, but almost always represent what is patently some mode of the eudemonic or the dysdemonic judgment.

### The Rôle of Custom in the Formation of Moral Judgments

While examining the credentials of authority as a factor in the development of moral ideals, we have been at the same time analyzing the case in behalf of a related but distinct claimant for honors. Perhaps the most popular ethical theory today is that which attributes the origin of moral distinctions to "custom." Custom, as we have seen, means a mode of action common to a group of persons; and to be really worthy of the name, it must

be one which has prevailed for a not inconsiderable period of time. This uniformity of action is supposed to have the power directly to make those who come under its influence, in particular the rising generation, believe that its ways are right. How this uniformity ever came into existence, and why the fact that everyone actually *treats* everyone else in a certain way should make us *want* everyone to treat everyone else in this way (which is what is meant by *right*), the proponents of this theory have never succeeded in explaining. Indeed, they have never really attempted to explain it. Of course, if custom is understood as meaning not merely modes of action, but morally approved modes of action, then custom is but another name for a certain form of authority, *i.e.* that of public opinion. In that interpretation, however, it has already been discussed. If, on the other hand, it really means what it says, namely, that in case most people do a thing a long while, everyone will end by wanting everyone (including himself) to do it, then, apart from its inner incoherence, it can easily be shown to be fundamentally false.

Let us see how the case stands among ourselves. A student attending a university in the northern part of the United States wears a straw hat all winter on a wager. This was certainly something unheard of—was it then regarded as an act of unheard of *wickedness?* People no longer attempt to eat peas with a knife. Do we regard the rebels who ignore this convention in the same light as a man who swindles a widow out of her life insurance? These questions and thousands like them answer themselves. We can as easily distinguish the unconventional or "queer" from moral delinquency as we can black from white. And in view of the substantial identity of the primitive mind and our own, as demonstrated by the field ethnologists of our generation, we are justified in attributing the same capacity to the savage until the contrary has been demonstrated. Such demonstration is farther away today than it ever was before. One of our leading ethnologists, Bronislaw Malinowski, has been spending the greater part of the past ten years among the natives of northwestern Melanesia. He understands their language, and unlike most of his fellow workers, is acquainted with the problems of ethics. His recently published book, *Crime and Custom in*

*Savage Society* (1926) deals the reigning theories as to the place of blind custom in primitive society a tremendous blow. The honors will certainly remain with him until a number of equally painstaking studies have proved that the author's material is not typical. And I believe those who are acquainted with the work of our contemporary field ethnologists will hardly expect any such proof to be forthcoming.

### Conclusions

In view of the preceding survey we are justified, I think, in reasserting the conclusions of the last Chapter.

1. The moral consciousness of the race is essentially one; the ultimate source of our moral judgments is always a certain attitude towards good or evil. Authority may help to bring home some obligations which might otherwise not be recognized; it may prevent a good many from being noticed which a fully enlightened and completely informed conscience would demand. But apparently it can do little towards making the valueless seem obligatory or the valuable seem wrong. Apparently also it can accomplish little when it runs counter to any strong native bent. Precisely how much influence it possesses, no one has as yet taken the trouble to determine. But we may assert without dogmatism, I believe, that it is far less than it is at present fashionable to assume.

2. Authority obviously has no validity except as it points to truth. There is such a thing as truth in the moral world; that is to say that there is such a thing as a valid standard. The settled opinions of the race, representing centuries of reflection upon conduct, are to be treated with a great deal of respect as exponents of moral truth. In fact, the burden of proof is definitely upon those who reject them. Public opinion, however, is not infallible, and must never be treated as if it were.

I must add a final word on a matter of great practical importance. There are several ways of getting others to accept our own opinions in matters of right and wrong. One is the appeal to authority, whether that of God, of the community, of the wise and good, or of myself. But if there is any truth in the contentions of this Chapter, another line of approach is open to us

which is likely to be found more effective. For one thing it is capable of producing real conviction, not the mere belief that you believe; and thus a conviction which will be able to stand the shock of conflict with an opposing authority. This alternative method may take several forms, of which I will mention two. First, we may show our hearer that the position for which we stand is logically involved in one which he himself firmly and whole-heartedly accepts. This was Nathan's method with David in the matter of Bathsheba. But there is another alternative which is frequently to be preferred. "I was once driven off a field where I was picking berries," writes one of Professor Dewey's respondents. "This made a great impression upon me and led to questions regarding the right of others to be so exclusive. The effectual appeal always lay in being led to put myself in the place of others." At the end of Chapter VIII in this book appears the following statement: That conduct is right which a judge would desire who was able to put himself completely in the position of each and every person making up the situation, and thus to realize to the full precisely what the proposed course of action would mean to all. In proportion as we are able to induce in others this state of mind, just in that proportion shall we be able to lead their consciences to valid judgment and their wills to right actions.

## Chapter XIII

# RESPONSIBILITY AND FREEDOM

The last Chapter completed our account of judgments of right. Nevertheless we are not yet entirely quit of the subject. Chapter IV asserted that the object of the moral judgment is the volition imbedded in the act. Now if moral responsibility means that one is a proper object of moral approbation or disapprobation, the fundamental condition of responsibility for a state of things must be the fact that it was produced by the volition of the agent. On this point everyone is agreed. But many moralists hold that a second condition is equally essential. The volition, they claim, must be one that arose in consciousness without a cause. Such volitions they call free. And in their opinion, accordingly, there can be no moral responsibility without this kind of freedom.

As will appear in the course of the following discussion I myself do not accept this view. I hold that the sole condition of moral responsibility is the determination of an act by a volition. But the opposing voices are too numerous and too influential to be ignored. It therefore seems necessary to examine their arguments. Unfortunately the term *moral responsibility* itself is variously defined. We shall therefore have to begin with an attempt to ascertain its meaning.

## I

### The Meaning of Moral Responsibility

*Responsibility* is often defined as liability to punishment, but this definition is at once too narrow and too broad. In the first place I may injure the property of another, as a house of which I am the tenant, whether by accident or otherwise. Here responsibility for the loss to the owner means that I am held to make compensation, a term of a very different order from punishment.

In the second place, I may become liable to punishment where I should utterly repudiate all responsibility. Thus a teacher once threatened her entire class with detention after school at hard labor if any one of them was caught whispering during the approaching address of a local notable. Accordingly when one small boy braved—or forgot—the consequences and communicated his thoughts to a neighbor during the period of prohibition, all his classmates were punished with him. Thereupon the fathers of some of the boys who had obeyed orders informed the principal in no uncertain terms that they did not regard their sons as responsible for the breach of decorum. As there may be liability to punishment without responsibility, so there may be responsibility without liability to punishment. There are all sorts of minor, and some forms of major wrong-doing for which the agent is fully responsible but to which no penalty, in the proper sense of the term, is ever attached. Finally, responsibility may be imputed for good deeds with the same propriety as for evil ones, as where we say that a certain man was responsible for the success of a drive for the benefit of the city hospital.

These facts justify certain conclusions which are obvious enough, but which are implicitly denied in an extraordinarily large proportion of the discussions of this subject. Legal responsibility is one thing; moral responsibility, of which alone we have been speaking, is quite another. Legal responsibility does mean, in part, liability to punishment. But so far are legal and moral responsibility apart that the latter can not even be defined as deserving of punishment, unless every blameworthy act and forbearance ought to be punished, and unless it ought to be a penal offense to manage a drive for charity.

What then do we mean by moral responsibility? A man is said to be morally responsible for a benefit or injury when, because of it, he is a proper object of moral approbation or disapprobation. By *proper* is meant that the approbation is not due to some error in observation or reasoning on the part of the judge, but that it would remain what it is upon a complete view of the relation of the agent to the results of his action. Punishment is thus at most a consequence of moral responsibility, not its essence.

We are said to be responsible for our actions. But the word

*action*, as we saw in Chapter IV, is ambiguous. It may cover the volition alone, or this plus the bodily movements which it has caused, or these plus the results which followed the movements, at least as many of them as were foreseen, or could have been foreseen. Now it must be noted that it is primarily the second or third of these items for which responsibility may be imputed. A window is broken in a schoolhouse basement; the money which was in my pocket when I left home has disappeared; Madeleine is crying. Here is an unfortunate situation; who, if any one, is responsible for it? These illustrations show that what a man is responsible for is always some "state of things," whether in the world of matter or of consciousness, for which he is properly liable to approbation or disapprobation.

### The Fundamental Condition of Moral Responsibility

The object of the moral judgment, as we have seen, is volition. If so, the fundamental condition of responsibility is that the state of things shall be the consequence of a volition. This is but another way of saying that voluntary actions are the sole object of the moral judgment.[1]

### Freedom of Action: Its Meaning and Its Relation to Responsibility

In so far as circumstances permit the volition to attain its end, that is to say, to bring into existence the state of things at which it aims, the agent may be said to be free, in one very important sense of this slippery term. It follows from the preceding that freedom in this sense—freedom of action, as it may be called—is the fundamental condition of moral responsibility. Whether it is the sole condition is a matter of controversy, but that it is one condition, and an essential one, is admitted by everybody.

### How Freedom of Action May Be Lost

The significance of this form of freedom will perhaps best be realized if we inquire by what means it may be suspended or

[1] See Chapter IV, page 52.

lost. First in importance are the superior forces of the material world, whether wielded by or incorporated in other human beings or not. Thus Jean Valjean was not free to save his sister and her children from starvation when he was chained to a galley bench, because even if he had tried to go to her aid he could not have succeeded in getting away. Secondly, there are the forces of which a man's own body is the seat. The paralytic member of a family is not free to save others, or himself, when the house is on fire. Again freedom may be limited by forces of which the mind is the seat. The facts are so important for a theory of criminal responsibility that they may be worth a moment's examination.

In volition, as we have seen, there is the idea of an end, a state of things which it is possible to bring about by my action, and this end is "adopted" by the "will," or more accurately by the self. The essential feature in volition is desire. In the simplest cases there is no opposition to the desire. The reader, for example, wishes to know something about the moral ideas of primitive peoples; there is an idea of self as possessing certain knowledge, and this idea attracts. If the end is attainable by present action, such action thereupon takes place. In more complicated cases two or more incompatible ends solicit the will. A man, for example, wishes to go to the theater this evening; he also wishes to stay with a sick friend who needs his presence. Between these alternatives he must choose. Here it is often said the desires "struggle with each other and the stronger wins." I do not think this an entirely accurate, or even intelligible account of what happens; but it will serve our purpose, for it at all events points to a very significant fact. Volition is a matter of desire; and in choice we accept that alternative, which, on the whole, under the existing conditions, represents what we really want.

Now volition is rendered impotent and thus unfree by any force which produces actions contrary to its demands. There is, for example, a great group of actions which are instinctive in the proper sense of that very much misused term. "Instinct," says Professor James, "is usually defined as the faculty of acting in

such a way as to produce certain ends, without foresight of the ends, and without previous education in the performance." [2] This is an excellent definition, even though Professor James himself does not stick to it. As thus defined, instinct, which is the characteristic feature of animal life, and, it may be added, of the first months of human life, does not play a large rôle in the actions of adult men. Winking when a finger is poked at your eyes, or sneezing, will serve as examples. In either you may indeed know that you are going to act, but this knowledge does not produce the muscular contractions; an unexpected sneeze goes off just as well as an expected one. To instincts should be added the expressions of the emotions and of the feelings of pleasure and pain, as laughter, or the cry of agony. Ordinarily all these reactions can be suppressed at will; but sometimes they get out of hand and take place in opposition to the strongest effort. In such cases action is of course unfree.

The significance of these facts for a theory of criminal responsibility consists in the light they throw on what may happen in mental disease. Speaking of a certain patient Dr. Maudsley writes: "Suddenly on some occasions his mental suffering rises to such a pitch of anguish or agony that he falls into a paroxysm of frenzy, during which he loses all self-control, and does violence to himself or someone else, not knowing at the time what he is doing, and being horror stricken afterwards when he realizes what he has done." [3]

A stage psychologically higher than instinct is reached in what is called "ideo-motor action." This rests on the principle that the bare idea of an action tends to produce the action itself, and will produce it unless there is some conflicting idea in the mind. This inhibiting force may be a volition, or it may be the bare idea of not performing the action. Ideo-motor action is an indispensable element of life, for it accounts for most of the routine of the day. Occasionally, however, it gets us into trouble. This is when, as we explain to our friends, we act or speak before we think. We certainly do think of the action or the words; otherwise nothing would happen. What we do not think of is the

[2] *Principles of Psychology*, Vol. II, p. 383.
[3] *Responsibility in Mental Disease*, p. 187.

consequences; and the whole performance takes place so quickly that desire has no chance to make itself felt. It is obvious that in pathological states, as drunkenness or mental disease, where the thought of an action is quick and the thought of the consequences slow in coming, there is an enormous opportunity for actions to take place which are demonstrably unfree.[4]

The principle that the idea of an action tends to produce action is responsible for another set of limitations upon freedom which are of both theoretical and practical importance. In such diseases as suicidal or homicidal mania, or kleptomania the idea of a criminal action haunts the mind and can not be driven out. Furthermore, in extreme cases, it actually produces the corresponding action, in spite of the most heroic efforts to prevent the catastrophe. What happens is that the volition loses its normal inhibiting power. "Before his confinement at Bicêtre a fit of madness came upon [a certain victim of homicidal mania] in his own house. He immediately warned his wife of it, to whom he was much attached; and he had only time to cry out to her to run away lest he should bring her to a violent death." [5] If this sounds paradoxical let the reader consult someone who has experienced the impulse to throw himself into running water or from the edge of a cliff. As one who once knew the former impulse at first hand I can testify that there is not the faintest desire to let oneself go, but merely an insistent idea of going, which can be prevented from producing action only by keeping the idea of not doing it firmly before the mind. In homicidal mania the inhibiting idea, even when backed by the strongest volition, has lost its normal power of control.

Cases such as these must not be confused with another situation with which they are sometimes identified. A prisoner of war may be subjected to the most horrible torture in order to extort from him information about the enemy's movements. When under such circumstances a man yields, we are inclined to excuse

[4] On ideo-motor action consult James' *Principles of Psychology*, Vol. II, pp. 486-494, 518-528. The numerous criticisms which have been leveled at this doctrine seem to me to leave the foundation unshaken.

[5] Maudsley, *Op. cit.*, p. 142. "Madness" here does not mean delusional insanity. It is simply a name for the seizure here described. There is an account of a parallel case in the *Journal of Criminal Law*, Vol. 7, p. 831.

him. But we do this upon an entirely different ground from that which leads us to relieve from responsibility the victim of homicidal mania. This will be clear if we remember that some men under such circumstances hold out to the very end. This has been true of the lowly Terra del Fuegan savages as it has been of the proudest Roman hero. Such a man we admire as a demi-god. In others words, he is the object of a very definite moral judgment. If the weaker man yields, we merely refuse to blame. The reason, however, is that we seldom actually blame anyone unless he falls below the average of attainment with which we happen to be familiar. In the same way to tax a man with stupidity is to place him below the average of intelligence of his community or group. Praise begins when we pass this point. When a man surrenders to threats of loss or to the pressure of pain he is thus still within the jurisdiction of the moral law, for while he yielded under pressure, nevertheless his yielding was an act of his will. The door of this castle was unbolted from within.

The illustration of the preceding paragraph shows that with changing conditions the area of freedom may vary in extent. A man who is stretched on the rack to compel him to reveal a secret is not free to save himself *both* from suffering pain *and* betraying his country. He is free to take but one. The same is true of the wayfarer who is held up at the point of a revolver with the demand: "Your money or your life." If the traveler had been killed without challenge, if the thoughts of the guardian of the secret could have been seen by a "mind-reader," the option would not have arisen. As it is, the actors about whom these dramas centered could still will, though within a narrow range; and the question is accordingly in order, was their choice a right one? In other words they still possess freedom, in the same way that a man with only half a dollar in his pocket has money. And in the first case as in the second the little they have may be very significant.

### Different Levels of Freedom

As the term has been used in the two preceding sections a man is free when he drinks a glass of whiskey, well knowing that

this is but the first step leading to a drunken debauch, and this in its turn the prelude to the loss of his job, with its consequences, poverty and disgrace. Yet such a man is also said to be a slave. This fact calls our attention to the existence of different levels of freedom. The whiskey-drinker is free when stepping off into the abyss, in a perfectly definite and very important sense of the term freedom, in that the contractions of the muscles which bring the glass to his lips and send the liquor down his throat are the results of a volition. But the desire which constitutes the volition is only a momentary desire. Later he will wish with all his soul that he had willed otherwise. Accordingly a higher level of freedom has been attained when a man is able to move his body, or refrain from moving it in response to his most enduring desires. In everyday language such a person is said to have self-control, or strength of will. The ideal to which the passing impulse is subjected need not be especially lofty; this form of freedom may be realized equally in the miser and the philanthropist. Each of these, however, stands upon a much higher psychological plane than he for whom the interests of tomorrow or next week are for all practical purposes non-existent. This is the freedom, not from law but from slavery, of which Spinoza writes in the last two books of his ethics.[6] It is not bestowed in equal degree upon all men, but, as will be pointed out later, it can be obtained by anyone who is sufficiently anxious for it to undergo the necessary discipline.

### Indeterminism and Determinism

*Freedom* as defined in the preceding section refers to the relationship between volition and some "state of things," that is to say, some situation or condition existing in the world of matter or consciousness. A man is free in this sense of the term in so far as he is able to bring into existence those states of things which he wills to produce; and, as everyone recognizes, it is only as he possesses this freedom that he can be regarded as responsible. But some moralists claim that in addition a second kind of freedom is indispensable to responsibility, namely, the freedom of the volition from all causes of whatever kind. In making this

[6] See especially Book IV, "Introduction."

claim they raise two questions: First, What is the nature of this alleged freedom? Second, What is the evidence that there can be no responsibility except where such freedom is a fact? We shall begin with the former.

The law of causation declares that every event has a cause and under the same circumstances the same cause will be followed by the same effect. We all recognize that this law applies without exception to the movements of material objects and to the rise in consciousness of our sensations, thoughts, beliefs, emotions, and feelings of pleasure and pain. We all recognize also that it holds for the manifestations of instinct, in the exact sense of this term, and indeed for the entire field of actions in which volition plays no part. But volitions themselves, according to the theory we are examining, are outside the jurisdiction of the law. Some representatives of this view maintain this holds for all volitions; others, more cautious, claim this exemption only for certain ones, those namely in which there are two or more alternatives before the mind, each of which really attracts.[7] This means that the volition which rejects the suggestion that I kill my best friend or throw all my money into the nearest stream might be caused, whereas the decision to restore to its owner a lost purse, when made by a man of high principles who is very much pressed for money, would be uncaused. The ideas of keeping and of returning the purse admittedly had their causes, whether these were the words of another person, or the result of the workings of the laws of association in his own mind. Vainly would you seek, however, in the man's character or anywhere else for the cause of the adoption or rejection of the suggestion. This is a causeless event.

The view that there are causeless volitions is called Indeterminism, and the freedom of volition from the law of causation is called the "freedom of indetermination." The opposing view which maintains that all volitions, like everything else, have their cause, is called Determinism.

[7] See James' *Principles of Psychology*, Vol. II, p. 577.

### The Indeterminist Doctrine of Moral Responsibility

We have discovered what is meant by this alleged freedom of indetermination. It now remains to inquire what evidence is offered for the proposition that it is a necessary condition of moral responsibility. The essential features of the typical argument for this position are faithfully represented, it seems to me, in the following quotation from a book which was rather widely read a generation ago:

"The universal existence of a moral consciousness [*i. e.*, a sense of moral responsibility, is] absolutely inconsistent with the notion of automatism [by this term is meant Determinism]. Our feelings of approval or disapproval in regard to human conduct are of an order widely different from those we entertain in regard to any kind of mechanical action. I have no moral approbation for the chronometer whose perfect timekeeping gives the true place of a ship at sea, such as I have for the maker of that chronometer, whom I know to have put forth his utmost skill in its construction, careless of advantage to himself, but thinking only of the human lives he helps to save. Nor have I any moral disapprobation for a watch whose stopping or bad going causes me to incur serious detriment by missing a railroad train, such as I have for the workman whose carelessness in putting the watch together proves to be the occasion of my misfortune. Yet upon the automatist theory neither of these human agents could help doing exactly what he did; and I am, therefore, alike unreasonable in blaming the man who has caused me injury, and in commending the man who has done good service."[8]

Dr. Carpenter, as will be observed, is attempting to prove his thesis by convicting Determinists of inconsistency in that, while they would never think of blaming a watch for "going wrong," they do not hesitate to blame a man that goes wrong. The exact nature of his charge, together with the reply of the Determinist, will appear, I believe, if we get the issue in controversy clearly before us. Both Indeterminist and Determinist agree that there is at least one condition of moral responsibility, namely freedom of action as above defined. The Indeterminist claims and the Determinist denies that there is in addition a second condition, namely freedom of indetermination. When the evidence for this second affirmation is demanded, the Indeterminist says: "Determinism destroys all differences between a man and a watch, so

[8] W. B. Carpenter, *Mental Physiology*, Preface to 4th Edition, p. XXX.

that it is inconsistent to hold the first responsible for the harm which he does, when you do not do the same for the second; a consistent Determinist would feel as little moral disapprobation for a bad man as a bad watch." To this charge the Determinist replies: "We should be inconsistent in blaming the man and not blaming the watch only if, on our theory, there were no difference between the two. But as we all agree there is a difference: the actions of the man are the products of volition, while the 'actions' of the watch are not. And this difference is all-important because, as everyone admits, the presence of the volition is a necessary condition of responsibility." If the Indeterminist answers, "Yes, but there must also be a second condition namely an uncaused volition," the Determinist responds, "This is precisely the point to be proved. You have not proved it but only asserted it. And he who in an argument merely asserts the truth of that which he is pretending to prove is guilty of begging the question."

The preceding analysis will enable us to avoid the confusion of mind underlying the following assertion made by one of the ablest defenders of Indeterminism: "That no man can be under a moral obligation to do what it is impossible for him to do . . . is an axiom as self-evident as any in mathematics."[9] Here a statement true of freedom in the first sense of the term is applied to freedom in the second. Ordinarily when I say that the attainment of a given end is impossible I mean I could not bring it into existence however much I might want to. If I then refrain from acting I obviously am not liable to moral blame because my forbearance is not due to any flaw in my will. Such a forbearance, however, is obviously a very different thing from one whose sole source is unwillingness to act.

The fact is that the stock arguments for the Indeterministic theory of responsibility are nothing but a more or less elaborate series of puns. Some assertion is put forward which holds beyond question for freedom of action. Thereupon it is claimed to have been demonstrated for freedom of indetermination. The passage from the one to the other is made possible by calling each simply "freedom."

[9] Reid, *Active Powers*, Essay IV, Ch. VII.

### The Determinist Doctrine of Responsibility

In opposition to the contention of Indeterminists, the Determinist maintains that so far from the moral value of conduct being destroyed if it is caused, on the contrary the value of a thing depends solely upon what it is, not upon how it comes to be what it is; that a volition, therefore, is neither better nor worse for having this or that cause, or no cause whatever. This is recognized by both parties to the controversy for every other form of personal excellence except the moral. A stroke of genius or a piece of stupidity, an expression of vulgarity or good taste, a ready response or a chilly indifference to the call of affection or the attractions of the beautiful—these things all have their causes, yet they may be the objects of praise or condemnation. Whence this alleged difference in our attitude as between moral and non-moral excellence? It can not lie in the fact that the former are more valuable than the latter, for this would only justify a more vigorous approbation or disapprobation, or possibly a feeling towards it of a different nature, but not a demand for a different relation to the law of causation. I suspect it is due principally to the chronic failure of Indeterminists to distinguish between the two senses of the term freedom, and their inveterate habit of applying to the second assertions which hold only for the first.

The Determinist claims, then, that the value of a thing depends not upon its origin but upon its nature. If this proposition is not self-evident on immediate inspection, its truth can be shown by an analysis of the values which attach to a good volition.

A volition is pronounced right, as we have learned in previous chapters, first because it is useful as a means to the attainment of goods outside of itself. This is its extrinsic value; and this value, obviously, remains unchanged whether the volition is caused or not, precisely as does the utility of intellectual gifts or physical strength. But volitions possess in addition certain intrinsic values. These also subsist in entire independence of the truth of the contentions of Indeterminists. One element in character which possesses intrinsic value is its ability to evoke

admiration. One object of admiration, as we remember, is power; and the power of the will is not unlike that which when displayed in the majesty of the mountain or the sweep of the ocean, arouses the emotion of the sublime. The sublime, however, derives none of its impressiveness from any supposition that it may be uncaused. And what is true of this form of beauty of character is equally true of all the rest. Another factor in the value which character possesses in the eyes of a good man is the congeniality of spirit to which it points—one of the most precious things in life. Here again, unless some reason can be shown why we should treat congeniality of moral interests on a different plane from any other form of congeniality, the question of causation is irrelevant. When Samuel Johnson felt like hugging Adam Smith on discovering that the latter liked rhyme, he certainly did not stop to inquire whether this taste was uncaused.

There still remains one factor which plays a rôle of the first importance in all moral condemnation, the emotion of anger or resentment. Can we justify our resentment against wrong-doing if the latter is at bottom precisely as inevitable under the conditions as intellectual stupidity or physical deformity? This question is really a double one. It asks first whether, as a matter of fact, we should feel no resentment if we did not suppose that the volition which evokes our anger was uncaused? It asks, in the second place, whether, in case resentment did make its appearance notwithstanding our belief in the determination of volitions, we should regard it as a feeling which we ought to try to suppress? These two questions can be answered together.

Resentment, we remember, tends to arise as a reaction to any cause of pain. A tangled fish line, a blow in a boxing match, the stupidity of a servant whom we know to be doing her best,—these things and countless others like them are liable to arouse anger.[10] By what process, then, do we come to confine its expression with fair success to the volitions of human beings? Resentment seeks to give pain; and of course we know that our impulse can not attain its end where inanimate objects are concerned. The door that slammed and hit us in the face does

[10] Chapter V, page 89 ff.

not in the least mind being kicked. Accordingly after a time we attempt to control the impulse to do so. When we are injured through the stupidity of another person our desire to retaliate could of course achieve its end. Many people therefore allow themselves this form of self-indulgence—some of them very freely. But a thoughtful man will recognize that in thus letting himself go he is inflicting pain without doing any counterbalancing good. A stupid person can not help his stupidity, in the sense that however much he may wish to rid himself of it, it will remain. Accordingly a man of any humanity will control, or seek to control the expression of bad temper in this case, just as he does when the offender is a slamming door. When it comes, however, to injuries having their source in the will, the situation is a very different one. No one becomes angry in order to prevent the aggressor from repeating his offense, any more than he feels fear for the purpose of keeping himself out of danger. But the expression of anger is under the control of the will. We can let it leap forth, or we can hold it back, as we choose. Similarly with the emotion itself; we can at least try to drive it from the mind, or, on the other hand, we can nurse it. When we are the victim of a wrong we can justify the giving way to the spontaneous expression of our feelings by the consideration that our reaction will tend to keep the aggressor from repeating the offense. Hence the inhibitions which arise in a kindly and thoughtful man in the case of stupidity not arising, or at least not applying under these conditions, he may allow his anger to pass over into action, and may do so without subsequent qualms of conscience.

### Indeterminism Has No Place for Judgments upon Character

The moral significance of a given volition, in itself considered, is thus entirely independent of whether it is caused or not. So far Determinism and Indeterminism are on the same plane. But this is not the end of the matter. For the Indeterminist the volition has no cause and therefore can not have its source in character. The volition therefore permits no inference as to the nature of the cause, since all inference from one thing to another,

as from smoke to fire, supposes some sort of causal relationship between them. The acceptance of this conclusion, however, would carry with it the complete destruction of a large number of our most important moral judgments. We condemn a deliberate far more seriously than an impulsive act, because we regard the former as more completely an embodiment of character than the latter. We consider a second offense to be far more serious than the first, for the same reason. Again Indeterminism can never justify shame felt today for a wrong committed yesterday. Yesterday's deed is dead, and nothing of it remains, as far as I. the agent, am concerned, except as it points to a trait in my character which still lives. Furthermore the layman's attitude towards omissions would have to be abandoned if Indeterminism were true. A person forgets an important engagement, or is thoughtless in driving a car; that is to say he does not think of the danger to which he is exposing other people. Now, as we have seen, memory may be determined by purely mechanical forces, such as frequency of repetition. But the most important single condition of a retentive and ready memory is attention. This in turn may for most practical purposes be regarded as a function of interest. When we omit to perform the duties demanded by the situation, probably half the time the cause is indifference on our part to the possible good or harm that may result. Now when we condemn such indifference, as we very properly do where the evidence is sufficiently conclusive, we are condemning the absence of volition and are condemning this void, this nothing, not in itself but as evidence of a certain more or less permanent flaw in the character. I conclude, therefore, that while Indeterminism may find a place for judgments upon individual volitions, it utterly excludes all judgments upon character.

### A Difficulty Considered

An apparent difficulty remains to be considered. Determinists hold, as we have seen, that the place of a given character on the scale of excellence depends upon what it is, not how it came to be what it is. Apparently, however, men do not apply this principle in passing judgments upon persons whose childhood was

warped or tainted by vicious surroundings. Thus a thief who was kidnapped in his youth by a band of pickpockets and trained to their occupation would be less severely blamed than one who, brought up in a good family, had deliberately betaken himself to a career of crime. But if everyone is to be judged on the basis of what he is, regardless of how he has reached this state, what justification, it may be asked, is there for discriminating between them?

This question may be answered by asking another. When a runner who has been trained for four years by a skilful and experienced coach beats a competitor who has been trained on an entirely wrong system, how does it happen that the spectators may judge the latter to have been at bottom a better athlete? The solution in each case is the same. Just in so far as we are thoughtful we look not merely at the surface when passing judgments, but try to penetrate to the potentialities, whether for good or for evil, that lie beneath. The boy who succumbs to a life of thievery is not blameless. There are those who have risen above such adverse conditions. But in a den of thieves his better nature, if he had one, had little chance to develop, while all that was worst in him was strengthened by exercise. As far as his native qualities are concerned, therefore, he may stand on a distinctly higher plane than appears at first sight. And if we discover evidence for this fact, we place him where he really belongs.

This principle explains also the allowance we make for the effects of disease and accidents, such as adenoids, epilepsy, a blow on the head, and much else of the same kind. These affect conduct in a number of different ways. Usually they do not operate directly through the character. Sometimes, however, they apparently do so by directly depressing altruism. If this be true, we ought to make the same allowances for such a person as we do for a runner who has entered a race before he has entirely recovered from an attack of pneumonia.

Again, pathological rage or fear may sometimes be urged as an extenuating circumstance. But it is with these as with any other pressure on the will, for example torture inflicted to compel a man to reveal a secret. The stronger the temptation the less

we blame him who succumbs. But in none of these cases should our disapprobation drop to zero, else it were inconsistent to praise him who conquers. In this conclusion I am so fortunate as to be in agreement with Dr. Maudsley, one of the most careful special students in this field.[11]

### Fatalism and Determinism

Determinism is frequently confused with Fatalism. This identification is of sufficient importance to merit examination.

Determinism is a general theory concerning the extent of the field of causation. It holds that every event in the mental and physical worlds, including volitions, has a cause. And Determinism, *qua* Determinism, makes no assertion of any kind as to the nature of the cause. It does not favor environment as against native endowment in the attempt to explain human conduct, or native endowment against the power of environment, or either as against any other conceivable agency. It does not even stand or fall with any particular definition of "cause." It merely maintains the absolute universality of the causal nexus.

Fatalism, on the other hand, as it is found, for example, in the old Greek myths, or in popular Mohammedanism, is primarily a particular theory about the nature and working of the ultimate cause in human affairs. It teaches the existence of an all-powerful supernatural being which, intervening at will in the orderly processes of nature, handles human beings as a chess player handles his men. Imagine, for instance, the knights and bishops endowed with some spontaneity and will of their own. If they should move or stand as the player desired there would be no interference on his part. But if not, he would pick them up and set them down, and if necessary hold them down, as he chose. They would have wills, they might even have "free wills"; but these wills would be impotent to produce results when they crossed the will of the master. A missionary was riding in a railroad compartment in company with some Hindu peasant women. She spoke of "our heart-breaking Indian mortality in babies and child mothers. There were sighs and nods from some, while others maintained stoutly that it was all a

[11] *Responsibility and Mental Disease*, p. 199.

matter of fate and the will of the gods. There is no dodging one's *karma*. If the child was fated to live you might throw it on the stones and it would be unharmed; but if it had come only for a season, to pay or collect some old debt, nothing could keep it, once the account was even." [12]

Fatalism of this sort is clearly as remote from Determinism as it is from Indeterminism. But Fatalism sometimes takes a somewhat more subtle form. Here Fate is represented as gaining its ends by tampering with the human will, strengthening, or, if necessary, creating certain desires, weakening or perhaps annihilating others. Thus if it wishes to force an honest man into fraud it may bring him face to face with temptation, and in that moment benumb his attachment to all the principles which have hitherto sustained him. Is not this, it may be asked, the quintessence of Determinism?

My answer is that while such a view of Fate would be compatible with Determinism as it would not be with Indeterminism, yet again it would not be the same thing. All that Determinism asserts is that every volition has a cause. But, Fatalism claims, *in addition*, that this cause is, at times, a conscious or half-conscious omnipotent being who, in the pursuit of his own whims, or selfish ends, or whatever it may be, interferes with the regular ongoings of nature by thrusting into me whenever he chooses desires foreign to my original character, or paralyzing or destroying others which are integral parts of its constitution. Determinism, in other words, is genus of which this variety of Fatalism is species. And it is possible to hold by the former and utterly to repudiate the characteristic features of the latter.

As a matter of fact all modern adherents of Determinism reject without equivocation the Fatalistic position. They believe that the individual volition is the product of the agent's character in its interaction with the circumstances that surround him at the time; that this character, in its turn, had its source in the native endowment which was his when his conscious life began, modified in greater or less degree by the influences proceeding from his environment, which have developed some potentialities and weakened others. All our explanations of human

[12] Mary G. B. Fuller, *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 136, September, 1925, p. 337.

conduct are in terms of these two factors, differences of opinion reducing themselves to divergent estimates of the relative importance of each as compared with the other. The view that our volitions are dependent upon character, and that its growth and decay take place without exception in conformity with the regular working of physical and mental laws, I shall call "Autonomic Determinism." It is thus separated by a great gulf from every form of Fatalism, whether that which represents Fate as snatching the cup from the hand held out to receive it, or that which maintains that individual volitions can be created by the sporadic injection of foreign substances into the will, or the extraction of its native essences by an arbitrary power from without.

While it may be admitted that as abstract theories the two views are very far removed from each other, it may nevertheless be objected that after all there is really no practical difference between them. In each case the inferior individual is doomed. I reply that there is an enormous difference between them, because on the view of Autonomic Determinism a man handicapped by a bad temper, laziness, lack of perseverance, excessive shrinking from pain, etc., can, *if he really wants to*, acquire a better character. This is because desires are really forces, and strong desires very powerful forces; and in every advance that desire makes towards its goal, it can take advantage of the uniform and unbroken workings of natural law, precisely as can the farmer in raising wheat. While if Fatalism were true, we could not tell at what moment a supernatural and sinister force might thrust itself into the situation, destroying at the turn of a hand the fruits of the labor of years. As it is, this possibility can be excluded.

Autonomic Determinism is in this respect equally superior to Indeterminism. On the Fatalistic theory there can be no security for getting results because of the possibility of the irruption of an outside force totally beyond the control of the human will. On the Indeterminist view there can be no cultivation of character for exactly the same reason that there could be no cultivation of the soil if there were no causal connection

between fertility, rain, excellence of seed, etc., on one hand, and growth, on the other. A "free" seed would either grow or not grow just as it chanced, leaving the farmer no foundation for calculation and thus for rational endeavor. Similarly, if the development of character is not subject to law, it can not be promoted by setting in motion any agencies of whatever kind, for an agency is a force which operates by producing or tending to produce determinate effects.*

## II

### Determinism and Moral Self-Culture

This issue is of so much importance that it may be worth while to point out in the concrete some of the methods which we may employ in the endeavor to bring out the best that is in us. This will show, as against Indeterminism, that success depends at every turn upon the invariable working of psychological laws. Conceive then of a man possessed of an earnest desire to rid himself of some pernicious habit, such as drunkenness or bad temper. How is he to go about it?

In the first place, during the intervals between temptations he should form as complete a picture as possible of the consequences of indulgence, and still more of the consequences of self-control. These will include the effects upon self as well as others; the effects in the way of what is commonly called happiness, and the effects on character; the indirect and diffused effects, as well as the direct. The greater the number of these considerations appearing before the mind, the greater the likelihood that conduct will be determined by those which represent the broadest and deepest, and thus the most worthy interests.

Furthermore he should allow, or rather require his mind to dwell upon these consequences until they cease to be vague, abstract ideas, and turn into concrete, living realities. For example, he should form a detailed and vivid picture of how his brother feels when wincing under his outbursts of temper; of the isolation and loneliness which commonly falls to those

*See Notes, XIII, "The Nature of Volition and Desire," p. 507.

who recklessly and habitually wound others in their attacks of anger; of the joy and consciousness of power that follow self-conquest after a hard fought battle.

As he should train his mind to turn to and realize the attractions of the good, so he should train it to ignore and make as unsubstantial as possible the attractions of evil. Keeping his thoughts from gambling may involve deliberately avoiding a street where a gambling hell is situated, or giving his attention to other absorbing interests when he feels the craving coming upon him. A physician ordered a young woman under his care to eat no candy. On his next visit he found an open box of chocolate creams on the table. When he expostulated his patient told him she had placed it there that she might smell it. She was not on the road to self-conquest.

Then he may reinforce a weak but militant motive by calling in other motives to serve as allies. The students of a certain college were once startled by the announcement that one of their number, the most gifted of the student body, but notorious for his dissipated habits, had decided to study for the ministry. The explanation was this. The young man had intended to become a lawyer. But one morning as he lay on his bed after a debauch and saw ahead of him the road he was traveling, and remembered how unavailing had been all his previous resolutions to reform, he suddenly decided to take a stand which would make further drinking either impossible or scandalous. He thereupon formed the decision to enter the ministry, and to make it known at once, and won his fight.

If a given temptation proves invariably too strong for the will, we might exercise our power of resistance on lesser faults, taking care to see that conquest in these cases is prompt and complete. It is possible to work up moral muscle as it is to develop the muscles of the body. We may grow from strength to strength by doing that which at any given time is difficult and yet well within the limit of our powers. This fact is simply one application of the law of habit.

The law of habit says: "That which is expressed lives and grows." As the activity becomes more and more completely a part of ourselves it becomes at the same time more and more

necessary to our life. In the end it may fuse so thoroughly with self that we can no more rid ourselves of it than we could run away from our body. The other side of the law of habit is the law of atrophy: That which is unexpressed decays and dies. This law makes it possible for us in the strain of conflict to look forward to peace after victory. For it means that we shall not be called upon to fight rebellious impulses forever, but that in the end they will lose their power to move us. For example, a man has a bad temper. If he habitually succeeds in controlling, not merely his vocal organs and his muscles of expression, but also the direction of his thoughts, so that instead of rolling the memory of the injury about in his mouth as a sweet morsel he speedily forgets it, the gusts of anger will slowly but inevitably grow less and less intense, until they can be controlled without serious effort, or else do not rise into consciousness at all. A famous traveler, while still a young clerk in a drug store, made up his mind to become an explorer. But he realized he possessed too much temperamental fear to be successful. Accordingly he used to walk the railroad trestles near his home at night. They were narrow, one-track structures, and when a train came along he had to lie down in a very narrow space between the track and the abyss and hold on with all his might. The fear succumbed to this treatment after a time and left him free to take up his chosen career in peace. What is true of the emotions of anger and fear is true of envy, censoriousness, suspicion, malice, hatred, and all the rest of this ugly brood. This same principle holds equally, of course, for the good. Perhaps the best known case of atrophy on record is that of the decay of Darwin's love for music, painting, and poetry through neglect to gratify them adequately.[13]

The same law applies, broadly speaking, to pleasure and pain. Pleasures that are *never* pursued lose in the end their power to attract; just as it does not occur to us to think of the palaces of multimillionaires as ours, or to long to possess them. Many appetites and practically all interests, good and bad alike, are capable of fading away into mere shadows if they are continually

[13] *Life and Letters of Charles Darwin,* Vol. I, p. 81; quoted below, Chapter XVIII, pages 379-380.

allowed to remain unstimulated by indulgence. "It is surprising," writes Professor James, "how soon a desire will die of inanition if it be *never* fed." [14] Even pain may be stripped of much of its precursory terrors and its worst emotional reverberations by the habit of unflinchingly holding oneself to a deliberately chosen course. Thus the process of self-conquest is a good deal like the course in the Danish Agricultural High Schools, where the tuition fee is largest in the first year and tapers off to a nominal sum in the last. "He who finds pleasure in vice, or pain in virtue, is a novice in both."

We thus see that every forward step in moral culture is taken within the domain of law and is made possible by the unbroken reign of law. Many considerations of consequences as compared with a few; vivid pictures of consequences as compared with those which are pale and abstract; absorption in the good to the exclusion of the foul and evil; the introduction of new motive forces to serve as allies; the growth of both good and bad impulses through exercise and their decay through neglect—what do these things mean if the development of conduct is not determined just as indisputably as is the growth of an acorn?

### Determinism and the Moral Culture of Others: Moral Education

What is true of self-culture holds for all attempts to raise the level of moral attainment in the world about us. The agencies employed with this end in view are selected on the assumption that except as resisted by counter-influences they can be relied upon to produce the desired results. Because of this dependence upon law some Indeterminists have denied the possibility of doing anything to improve the character of others. If they had applied this principle to self also, it would have been a perfectly legitimate corollary of their theory—and at the same time its *reductio ad absurdum*.

Attempts to promote the moral growth of others are doubtless as old as the human race, and they may be found today alike in the most primitive and in the most highly civilized societies. Many of the instrumentalities adapted to this purpose are fa-

[14] *Principles of Psychology*, Vol. I, p. 124.

miliar to all of us, but there are some which may be worth a few moments' consideration.

One of these is systematic moral education both in the home and in the school. Moral education of some sort there has been ever since offspring were born to beings that could be called human. But from the days of Confucius, Buddha, and Plato, individuals here and there have been trying through reflection to systematize its procedure, to adapt it more completely to the actual nature of those it was meant to affect, and to devise more effective methods than those which have come out of the careless observation and casual thinking of the everyday world. For a generation, now, the subject has been attracting attention as never before. While, presumably, almost everything still remains to be done, a beginning has certainly been made.

Moral education includes what are called moral instruction and moral training. The former should seek primarily to develop what Arnold of Rugby called moral thoughtfulness; that is, the power and the habit of discovering the moral issues involved in conduct; in particular of seeing what difference it makes whether one does right or wrong. This involves the tracing of the effects of the right and wrong courses of action respectively, the effects upon self and upon others, the effects upon happiness and character. In connection with this it involves the training of the power to determine what conduct is right and what wrong. Moral training seeks to develop the ideals thus clarified, strengthened, and rendered comprehensive and consistent, by giving them the opportunities to express themselves in action. As applied to the school this may mean the introduction of pupil government and the "socialized recitation," the organization of "outside activities" through coöperation with the teacher, and the provision of opportunities for the pupils to work for the school and the community. Many educational authorities advocate either instruction or training to the exclusion of the other, while still more believe the old ways are good enough. But everyone of these methods, even in their present imperfect forms, has produced marked results; and when a number of them are combined they set at defiance, I believe, the laws of arithmetic, and show that in the world of mind one and one are often far more than

two. In the hands of a genius such as Fénelon, Thomas Arnold, or William George, moral education has exhibited possibilities which are a sufficient answer to all skepticism. Some day perhaps we shall have caught the spirit, as well as learned the methods of these masters. Then moral education will become a power in the world.

### The Elements of Character with Which Moral Education Must Work

It is not the province of ethics to suggest, much less to work out the methods by which the moral potentialities latent in human nature can be transformed into active, life-giving forces. But our science may properly be asked to specify the elements of character with which moral education must work. We must distinguish between rightness of volition in the proper sense of the term and mere outer conformity to the demands of right. The former consists in devotion to the moral ideal, in doing an act that is right for the same reason that we judge it to be right; the latter is represented by the cashier who is restrained from running off with the funds of the bank only by the fear of the penitentiary. The valid ideal, as we have seen, is the greatest attainable good of these affected by our conduct. Loyalty to such an ideal for its own sake, accordingly, has its source in altruism, as far as the interests of others than self are involved.

Altruism can apparently be developed most effectively by strengthening its normal stimulants. Of these the two most powerful, as we have seen, are imagination and love. The imagination, presumably, like every other power of the mind, grows by exercise. The best form of exercise is actual contact with life at first hand. We enter most completely into the minds of others through service. We are apt to be interested most strongly in those we benefit. It was with this fact in view that when Benjamin Franklin wanted the favor of an influential politician, he borrowed a valuable book from him. Moral education, therefore, must open to youth abundant opportunities for service. Another method of awakening the capacity for interest in others is the development of the power and habit of concreting the

abstract. This means translating the bare words of the spoken or printed page into the flesh and blood for which they stand. Literature, history, and above all biography supply priceless materials for this purpose.

The imagination may be appealed to by the plight of some specific individual or individuals. But its noblest function consists in painting for the mind the picture of a society of human beings in which courage, patience, loyalty, integrity, charity of judgment, and kindness are the reigning principles, and in which every good man takes and holds his appointed post at whatever odds against the enemies that threaten its existence. In the great "Funeral Oration" Pericles said: "I would have you day by day fix your eyes upon the greatness of Athens until you have become filled with the love of her. And when you are impressed with the spectacle of her glory reflect that this empire has been acquired by men who knew their duty and had the courage to do it." To lead youth to fix its eyes upon a commonwealth of righteousness until filled with the love of it, this is the high privilege of the teacher or parent who has himself caught a glimpse of the beatific vision.

The second great stimulant of altruism is love. But there is no reason why we should attempt to develop in anyone a feeling of affection for all his fellow-men. In fact, we could not do it if we would. But we can do much to strengthen two forces closely allied to it, namely, admiration and gratitude.

We have studied the influence of admiration upon moral ideals in Chapter III. Often it leads conscience astray; still more often it reveals values to which we might else have been blind. In any event it is a fact with which we must reckon that men are more easily moved to sacrifice themselves for others whom they admire than for those in whom they can discover no particular excellence. The highest type of man, to be sure, does not wait till moved by such considerations. We are not told that John Howard, for instance, was under any delusion as to the intelligence or character of the prisoners to whom he devoted his life. But then the majority of men do not belong to the highest type. And even a Howard might well feel more enthusiasm in working for a prisoner whom he believed to be really sound at the core

than one in whom he could find not a single redeeming trait. Accordingly we must develop in the young a realizing sense of the actual good there is in the average human being, much of which we fail to see because the bad attracts our attention while the good is taken for granted and escapes notice. In the second place we must bring them to a knowledge of the potentialities for good locked up and hidden in the minds of the most commonplace men and women, and even of the moral outcasts of the race. More than this, we must show that much of what is best and finest in human nature often fails of fruition only because the man has been the victim of coldness, contempt, harsh treatment, or injustice. For examples of such tragedies there is no need to go to the works of George Eliot. All about us are Silas Marners, as hard, as bitter as he was before the storm and the winter's cold laid the little child at his door.

Closely akin to the influence of admiration upon altruism is that of gratitude.

> "The evil that men do lives after them,
> The good is oft interred with their bones."

While the good we receive from others is often buried in forgetfulness the day after the benefit, an injury may rankle in our memory for years. Thus it comes about that a single wrong at the hand of a friend or acquaintance may blind us to a hundred past services. Moral education can and should train us to see life steadily and see it whole, in this as in all other aspects.

Certain of the greatest services of which we are the beneficiaries we habitually ignore, indeed are often ignorant of. I mean those services, not infrequently purchased by the extreme of sacrifice, which have created some part of our material civilization and the greater proportion of the social institutions and cultural values under which we live. Public spirit and national and race patriotism will be awakened by showing what has been done in the past, what is being done today, always by honest and faithful labor, often with no thought and sometimes with no possibility of requital, to create the best elements in the life of America and the life of the world.

A "scab" is an object of undying hatred to the members of the labor unions in so far as he keeps his job and draws his wages regularly during a strike, and thus loses nothing if it fails, while he gains with the rest if it succeeds. If his sole reason for refusing to join his fellow-workmen in the struggle for a better standard of life is the desire to be at ease while others starve and shiver, and then to enjoy the advantages secured by their agonies, we all feel that he deserves every malediction of which he was ever the target. Every selfish man is at bottom nothing better than a scab. He takes advantage of the tools, the organization, the morale which make civilization, and contributes nothing in return. When our eyes are opened to see these facts we recognize immorality as a form of sponging, as parasitism, and all morality becomes a debt of honor, a matter of pride, of self-respect.

If we are to serve others at the cost of personal sacrifice, we must believe that our actions are of some real value to them; we must believe, in other words, in the possibility of success in service. In many cases the outcome of the proposed action in behalf of another is certain. In many others it is a matter for guessing, and which way we guess will depend largely upon our entire attitude towards life. Hence the importance of a melioristic creed. This means the belief that the race has to a large extent its fate in its own hands, and that life can be made better worth while than it otherwise would be, or can be rendered more bitter than death by human actions. A well-grounded conception of human progress, some notions of the causes which have produced it in the past and may be trusted to produce it in the future, are thus a very important equipment for the moral life. Without such ideas there may be conscientiousness, but there is likely to be little enthusiasm. And, as Sir John Seeley wrote in *Ecce Homo,* "no virtue is safe that is not enthusiastic."

The primary appeal of moral education should be directed to altruism. But within limits egoism represents a legitimate interest also. In the first place, we have a duty to self as well as to others. And we habitually neglect our obligations to our larger self, the self of the next year and the next decade, whose

claims are too often obscured by the clamorous appeals of the next moment. Not less egoism, but in a sense more, is what the world needs.

Then there is one form of egoism of which we can not have too much, the aspiration for the possession of perfection of character. We need to be led to realize more completely the direct attractiveness of the good character and the good life, those characteristics in virtue of which it arouses immediate admiration. For what we admire in others we tend to desire to possess for ourselves. "As to other points," wrote John Milton, "what God may have determined for me I know not; but this I know, that if ever He instilled an intense love of moral beauty in the breast of any man He has instilled it into me. The goddess in the fable pursued not her daughter with a greater keenness of inquiry than I day and night my ideal of perfection."

It is not everyone that bridges the gap between the worlds of self and others in this fashion. For many good men the ideal of personal perfection is not the master motive. The stuff which forms their moral ideal is the thought of the good of others rather than any advantage of whatever kind for self. To such, and indeed to all others, an enormous liberation of moral force may result from the discovery that entirely apart from the intrinsic value of character to its possessor there is no such conflict between the interests of self and others as a superficial observation seems to show. I shall discuss this subject at some length in Chapter XXII. Here I will only say that in my opinion nature has not bungled so egregiously in fixing the relations between individuals as the pessimists imagine. If this conclusion can be maintained, will it have any tendency to convert the thoroughgoing egoist into a lover of his kind? By no means. All your words of wisdom will never charm the leopard into changing his spots. But what will happen is this. Those in whom altruism is a genuine force will be protected against some of the most insistent impulsions of egoism on discovering that its hostility to altruism is based fundamentally upon a delusion. Thus they may have the strength to keep the faith while otherwise they might fall.

### Determinism and the Moral Culture of Others: Farther Instrumentalities

According to some writers, man is a kind of putty which can be moulded into any desired form. This doctrine, as the readers of Chapter XII will realize, does not appear to me to be proved. By the side of nurture I believe we must recognize nature or native endowment, itself largely, though not entirely, a matter of heredity, as a fundamental factor in determining the course of human life. While the matter is still under controversy, the relation between these two factors seems to be adequately formulated in the following words of Carlyle. His statement, to be sure, refers to intellectual qualities, but it applies equally to moral ones.

"It is maintained by Helvetius and his set that an infant of genius is quite the same as any other infant, only that certain surprisingly favorable influences accompany him through life, and especially through childhood and expand him, while others lie close folded and continue dunces. . . . With which opinion, cries Teufelsdröckh, I should as soon agree as with this other, that an acorn might, by favorable or unfavorable influences of soil and climate, be nursed into a cabbage or a cabbage seed into an oak. Nevertheless, continues he, I too acknowledge the all-but-omnipotence of early culture and nurture: hereby we have either a doddered dwarf bush or a high-towering, wide-shadowing tree; either a sick yellow cabbage, or an edible, luxuriant green one." [15]

If this is a fair presentation of the facts, society must face the necessity of improving, and improving radically, the native endowment of the race. This is perhaps the most important subject before the civilized world today; the master key, as far as there is one, to the solution of all other social problems. It is being studied by the young and vigorous science of eugenics.

In battle, victory may be gained either by strengthening the attack or weakening the defense. The great enemy to morality is selfishness. We can do much to lessen its strength in two ways; first, by a demonstration that much of the supposed conflict between the demands of egoism and altruism is not real but imaginary. To this subject I have already referred and I shall return to it in another place. A still more effective course, if it

[15] *Sartor Resartus*, Book II, Ch. II.

be practicable, would be to organize social life in such fashion as to reduce or destroy both the apparent and the actual disparities between the warring interests.

This suggestion points to a tremendous program of social reconstruction concerning which I can only drop a hint. Plato in his *Republic* required community of property and what is called community of wives of the governing class. This he did because he believed two of the most serious evils of Greek life were the craze for money, and family selfishness joined with family pride; and men, he thought, ought not to be subjected to temptations far too great for most of them to bear. Modern society, I am convinced, will not choose to follow the great Greek philosopher in these particular applications of this principle. But the principle itself is of eternal validity. "Lead us not into temptation" has been the prayer of Christendom for two thousand years. We must answer our own prayer, and remould, if necessary, the entire fabric of our social life, till there is established some sort of equilibrium between the moral strength of the average man and the temptations he is compelled to meet.

### Conclusion

This survey of the instruments of moral progress, incomplete and imperfect as it is, will serve, I believe, to bring home once more the truth of the contention from which we started. The evocation through moral education of latent possibilities for good, the improvement of the native moral endowment of the generations that are to come, the reduction of the strain upon egoism,—these promise a future far more attractive than the present sorry scheme of things. Our modern material civilization is due to the employment of sources of power previously unused, such as coal. But for the more beautiful moral order that is to arise, there are also waiting powers only partially utilized in the past, the rich potentialities for good which lie within the soul of man. A race which has discovered through terrible toil how to use material forces will learn in time to utilize moral forces also. But its success will depend absolutely upon one condition, namely, the ability to count upon the unbroken reign of law in the moral as in the physical world.

What has Indeterminism to set against this? No Indeterminist has any rational ground for believing that he himself, his child, or society as a whole will grow better with the passing years, or even succeed in maintaining present standards of achievement. In his haste to assert that all men can become better, including those who have no wish to, he has left an equal chance that all may become worse, including, again, those who have no wish to. Furthermore, neither in his relation to himself, his child, or his race can he either contribute to moral progress or help to avert moral ruin. Where there are no causes there are no agencies. Thus the Indeterminist closes the door to hope, except the gambler's hope that chance may play the game for him. Let him not talk about "influences" which are not causes. An influence is nothing other than a cause. Expose a thousand people to any influence good or bad. As it becomes stronger and stronger, at least up to the point where counter-forces enter, the conduct of ever larger numbers conforms to it. To deny that it is a determining factor in this conduct is to use words without meaning. And where there is determination there are causation and the orderly processes of law. In a famous essay, "The Dilemma of Determinism," Professor James presented Indeterminism as a gospel of deliverance. To me it seems a message of despair.

## Chapter XIV

# THE STANDARD OF RIGHT IN ITS RELATION TO PRACTICE

From the point of view of practice, the most important problems of ethics are: Is there an objective standard of conduct? and, if so, what is it? Directly or indirectly all the preceding Chapters have contributed their part to the solution at which we have arrived. If the preceding analyses have been correct, all moral judgments have their source in our desires for the good or harm, respectively, of conscious beings; the application of the adjective *right* to conduct meaning that it exhibits the attitude we wish human beings as such to take towards each other's welfare. The valid standard is that which appears when we work out the implications of this impersonal point of view and apply them consistently in our judgments upon volitions. It reads, as will be remembered, as follows: "That action is right which aims to bring into existence the greatest amount of good for all concerned attainable under the conditions." (Chapter VIII, page 140.)

This formula may perhaps appear somewhat abstract and vague. We may accordingly find it advantageous, in view of its great theoretical and practical importance, to examine it with more care than we have hitherto given it, for the purpose of determining its precise significance and discovering what value it may possess as a guide in the complexities of actual life. This end can be accomplished most effectively by watching it in action, that is to say, by setting it to work. I shall select as our material the problems raised in Chapters II and III. They are not to be studied primarily for their own sake, since this book aims to deal solely with principles. But it is hoped that this excursion into the field of affairs will create a concrete idea of the meaning and value of our standard by exhibiting it engaged in the task of dealing with certain representative problems of practice.

We shall start from that center of our interests, self, and

inquire how far each of us is bound to sacrifice his personal good for the benefit of others.

### The Place of Self in the Moral Ideal: Negative and Positive Morality

The answer which our standard gives to the question, "How far am I bound to sacrifice my personal good for that of another?" has been formulated by Professor Sidgwick in the following words: "Each one is morally bound to regard the good of any other individual as much as his own, except in so far as he judges it to be less when impartially viewed, or less certainly knowable or attainable by him." [1] The validity of this requirement is widely recognized in its application to the injury of others. That in general we may not steal or use violence in pursuing our own interests we know well enough, whatever we may elect to do. The refusal to profit by injuring others is called "negative morality." Current standards of negative morality, while still susceptible of much improvement, are, on the whole, fairly satisfactory. But when it comes to the claims of positive morality, that is to say, the duty of actual service, the commonly accepted standards are certainly more lax. "You must tell the truth and stand by your engagements; but apart from these obligations, you are not bound to make serious sacrifices (outside the family) for the benefit of others except as they are in dire need or great danger"—this is probably a fair transcript of the moral ideals of the average man in the community about us.

Now our formula for right knows nothing of this distinction. According to it, right consists in attempting to bring into existence the greatest amount of good attainable under the circumstances, and it makes no difference in principle whether this is done by action or forbearance. We ought therefore to wish to know precisely what this means in practice.

### The Place of Self in the Moral Ideal: Applications to Practice

Does, then, this principle of equality of obligation as between self and another mean that we ought to give all our goods to

[1] *The Methods of Ethics*, 7th Edition, Book III, Ch. XIII, sec. 3, p. 382.

feed and clothe the poor? The assumption at the basis of our present-day economic society—what we call the competitive system—is that the average man will be likely to shirk, more or less completely, his share of the world's work, except as he is driven to labor by the spur of necessity. This statement can be maintained only with large and important exceptions. There are fortunate men in almost every department of economic life who love their vocation and would not abandon it if they could. Regard for the interests of those whom one is serving plays a genuine rôle, not merely among professional men, but also among other workers in the great field. Nevertheless, the broad truth of the current assumption can not be gainsaid. If this be a fact then the indiscriminate giving away of goods on the part of any considerable number of persons would involve society in dire disaster, for it would undermine the foundations upon which its economic life is built. Financial aid in times of exceptional need, especially where the situation is not due to the fault of the individual, will always be a right which the unfortunate may claim from their more happily situated brothers. But indiscriminate charity, as our social workers are now telling us, destroys or tends to destroy habits of independence, industry, and thrift, qualities without which modern civilized society could not maintain its existence for a day.

Nor does the moral ideal require that all of us should devote ourselves to what are called philanthropic pursuits. If all the farmers should rush into settlement work what would become of the dwellers in towns and cities who must eat of the products of other people's farms or starve to death? What, too, would become of the people unfortunate enough to live within the radius of the activity of the settlements?

The fact of the matter is that happiness can not be passed around like cake. And while we have it in our power to inflict all sorts of suffering, mental or physical, upon others, from the irritation of teasing to blinding or crippling for life, definite limits are set to the amount of good which we can do for most other people. This is true quite apart from the consideration just urged. For the larger part (not all, as some moralists are teaching) of our pleasures in life is due to successful activity of one

sort or another. The center or source of this activity must always be within. We can help others by supplying some of the external conditions necessary for success, and by removing or helping to remove barriers too formidable for their unaided powers. We can train, inform, and strengthen the inner impulse to a certain extent, by measures hygienic and, in the broadest sense of the term, educational. But after all, the limits set by an inexorable nature are somewhat narrow. The positive happiness of each of us is a matter which has been entrusted primarily to our own hands.

These things, then, our formula does not mean. What it does mean, is, first, that, in the words of the French philosopher Comte: "Every person who lives by any useful work should be habituated to regard himself not as an individual working for his own private benefit, but as a public functionary working for the benefit of society." If a man is compelled to work for a living, he is bound to seek success solely by giving better service than his competitors. If he has inherited wealth, he must not loaf his life away; he must find some definite mode of activity, whether it be business, the pursuit of a profession, political life, research, or what not, to which he seriously devotes himself as a servant of society. Every man and every woman should place his or her abilities freely at the disposal of the community in so far as more imperative obligations do not forbid it.

The money which a man gains through the exercise of his vocation he may ordinarily take with the same good conscience that he expects to find in others under the same circumstances. All of his gains alike, whether the amount be great or small, should be regarded as a trust fund to be used for the benefit of the world. How this trusteeship should be exercised depends upon a large number of conditions, of which the amount of the income is the first. The question therefore can not be discussed in general terms and this is not the place to consider it in detail. What it involves in the abstract, however, is at least in part not difficult to state. It means, among other things, a mind more open to claims in certain specific directions than is that of the average member of society today; claims, namely, of employees in the way of both wages and mode of treatment; claims of re-

ligious, educational, and charitable institutions, and of all good causes that require personal devotion or money if they are to succeed; finally certain claims that usually appeal only to egoism, but may appeal equally to the broadest altruism; the claims, namely of sound business enterprises for capital with which to supply the needs of the community for consumption goods and of the workers for the means of livelihood.

### Ties of Family

The principles by which we have justified a certain preference for the good of self in the matter of positive service, justify an equal partiality in favor of the members of our family. In the first place the family is an economic unit. The wife and mother ordinarily does as much work and often carries as great responsibilities as he into whose hands the family income happens to be paid. Indeed, except among the wealthy, she usually does more actual work. For

"Man's work is from sun to sun
Woman's work is never done."

As for the children, if they have not yet reached maturity and obtained a suitable education, no parasitism is involved in supporting them.

In the second place, the obligation of special service within the family follows from the nature of the situation which arises when a number of people who are bound to each other by ties of blood and affection live together under one roof. They know each other's real needs better than the needs of those who live removed from them, and hence can help each other with the maximum of economy of effort. The affection of each for the other will serve to prevent imposition. On the contrary, as Sidgwick points out:

"The kindnesses which are its outcome and expression commonly win a requital of affection; and in so far as this is the case they have less tendency to weaken the springs of activity in the person benefited, and may even strengthen them by exciting other sources of energy than the egoistic—personal affection, gratitude, the desire to deserve love, and the desire to imitate beneficence."[2]

Hence the maxim, "Thou shalt love the fellow-members of

[2] *Methods of Ethics*, 7th Edition, Book IV. Ch. III, sec. 3, p. 433.

thy family as thyself," can be carried through with few of the limitations with which the broader rule, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," is confronted when it is applied to the positive service of the community as a whole. In other words, the principles of the primacy of the greater good and the primacy of the good of the nearer are ordinarily not in conflict. On the other hand, the duties of the family must always be exercised in subordination to the requirements of the ultimate standard. Hence, in certain cases, as in that of the man at the switch, the duty to serve the larger whole rather than the family is plain.

### The Claims of Gratitude

Among those to whom we feel bound by special ties because of their relationship to ourselves must be counted our benefactors. But if "each one is morally bound to regard the good of any other individual as much as his own," and the good of no other individual more than his own, so that the claims of all individuals upon him are in principle equal, is there any room left to follow the promptings of gratitude, which bid us single out our benefactors and make them the recipients of special favors? In a society with primitive moral ideas it may be regarded as obligatory to cheat or even rob a person indifferent to ourselves, in order that we may the more effectively serve those who have served us. Such ideas all morally mature persons would of course repudiate. But now suppose we have taken the next step in our moral development and recognize that the principles which apply to negative morality apply to positive morality also; in other words, that we ought to love all our neighbors as ourselves and none more than self. Can we find within the seemingly narrow limits set by this rule, any place for the expression of our gratitude in deeds of beneficence?

I reply that, in the first place, the primary function of gratitude is not to create new duties. It is rather so to stimulate the altruistic spirit that we shall be more willing to recognize and perform duties which we ought to perform anyway, quite apart from the impulse to requite a favor. Gratitude, in other words, makes us willing and glad to do for some one person on some

one occasion what we ought to be doing for many. Furthermore, it enables us to serve our neighbor without converting him into a parasite, either upon ourselves or society at large. For parasites do not commonly perform services for others which call for gratitude. Again, since between equals there ought to be more or less of a give and take, gratitude unites with self-respect in demanding that we return sacrifice for sacrifice. Finally, it impels us to make one return for exceptional services which every man craves, and to which, under ordinary circumstances, he is entitled; this is appreciation. Not infrequently all that is required is verbal expression. On the other hand, it is sometimes our duty to make the return in the form of that which has economic or some similar value, simply because what costs us something in the way of money, time, or effort, is a more impressive evidence of appreciation than any number of bare words. If a day laborer saved your child from drowning at the risk of his own life, he would not think you felt very keenly the nature of his sacrifice or the extent of the service, if you showed your appreciation in no other way than by sending him a Christmas card.

These consideration, severally or in combination, justify us in giving preference to one to whom we are bound by ties of gratitude, when, among a number of persons all of whom are equally in need of help, it is for any reason possible to serve but one. One of Lincoln's biographers writes:

"Lincoln never lacked a friend and never forgot one. A man in New Salem who had trusted him for board was himself homeless in his old age. Lincoln, with his gratitude still warm after many years, went to a distant part of the state where his one-time benefactor was an inmate of the poorhouse, took him from the place and found a good home for him."[8]

Lincoln crowded his life to the utmost with good deeds of all kinds. But it is obvious that he could not spend his time finding comfortable homes for all the inmates of poorhouses in Illinois, and at the same time earn his living by practising law. There had to be some kind of selection. And his choice of an object for his benefaction in this instance can be justified by the most exacting standards.

[8] James Morgan, *Abraham Lincoln, The Boy and the Man*, p. 48.

### The Claims of Personal Excellence

The layman, as we remember, tends to regard a man of higher character as having a superior claim to good treatment as compared with a man of mediocre moral qualities. His position is, "The good of those who are worthy of admiration ought to be preferred to the good of those who are less worthy" (Chapter III, page 45). It is true he is apt to apply this principle in very inconsistent fashion, using it in one place and ignoring it in another where the situations are essentially identical. But consistently or inconsistently he uses it more or less frequently. Furthermore, he does not confine his demands for a differentiation in favor of the admired to the objects of moral admiration. Take the history of the race as a whole and you find everywhere the belief that preferential treatment is due to the admirable in physical strength and skill or in intellectual power, as well as in moral excellence. It is on this basis that men have justified the special privileges of an aristocracy of birth, supposed to be a group of the best, and that the resultant inequalities have been accepted by the "lower classes" as essentially just. The special privileges of this aristocracy began to be destroyed in Europe, roughly speaking, with the French Revolution, and the process may perhaps be said virtually to have come to an end with the close of the World War. In the English-speaking part of the Western continent they never existed in any large way. They have ceased, therefore, to be a practical problem. But what has disappeared forever is primarily the conception that the actual aristocracies were composed of the best. There still remains much of the old sentiment that the best, if you can only identify them, are entitled to special rights and privileges.

The most eloquent and influential as well as the most thoroughgoing exponent of the aristocratic ideal is Friedrich Nietzsche. With him it is a creed to be consistently and ruthlessly applied to the reconstruction of human life. In his view society may be divided into two layers, the slave class or the herd, and the master class. The members of the latter are distinguished from the former, primarily by the possession of strength; in particular,

strength of intellect and strength of will. They are the born rulers of mankind. As against them the members of the herd have no rights which their superiors are bound to respect. Hence in the struggle to gain power and to maintain it, indeed at every point where the two castes come into contact, the masters will use deceit and violence with as little scruple as the hunter feels in using them against the wild beasts of the forest. Nietzsche's conception of human excellence is preposterously narrow, his general system is an incoherent mass of vague and contradictory statements, as becomes one who attempts to be a philosopher, when his endowment is primarily that of a lyric poet. But his significance for the history of contemporary thought is that he is the only writer who has ever tried to work out, in even a tentative way, the principle that personal excellence as such confers superior rights.

The claims of excellence to special rights and exemptions were considered in Chapter VIII, and I do not intend to go over the ground a second time. I will confine myself to the assertion that what is true of the defenders of retributive punishment holds for Nietzsche. The minute you attempt to get his ideas down from the clouds to the earth and think through patiently the problems which arise in reducing them to practice, you will discover not merely that they ought not to be applied to human affairs, but that they cannot be so applied with anything remotely approaching consistency.

I can not refrain from adding another word. There are moralists who loathe Nietzsche's teachings, who nevertheless insist that all recognition of the existence of obligations as between man and man rests upon a belief in the worth of human nature. These people are Nietzschians in spirit however loudly they may declaim against their master. It does indeed make a difference in practice whether you assert that all men have worth and therefore should be treated in some other way than you would treat wild beasts, or whether on the other hand, you maintain that only a very few have worth and therefore should be treated better than wild beasts. But this is merely a difference between statisticians. At the foundation of each assertion lies the same fundamental assumption. If there is any truth in the conclusions

reached in this book the right of our neighbor to our service and our forbearance has its source in his needs. This fact would be self-evident to all of us if we were properly endowed with the power to put ourselves in his place; in other words, if we ourselves were not very imperfect beings.

### The Problems of Punishment

We turn from a consideration of the alleged privileges of excellence to the penalties of moral imperfection, more specifically, to the problem of punishment. In Chapter VIII we saw that revenge can have no place in a life guided by the moral ideal. This conclusion does not mean that after the fashion of Tolstoy and the Society of Friends we renounce the institution of punishment. On the contrary, our fundamental principle, I believe, requires self-defense against unwarranted aggression as a duty on the part of the individual and of society alike. And the institution of punishment is today, whatever it may have been originally, the state's organ for defending its members against violence, theft, and other serious forms of injury. Punishment, then, may be justified as the less of two evils, on the following grounds. In the first place, it acts or tends to act as a deterrent of wrong doing; that is to say, it tends to prevent the criminal from repeating his crime, and other members of society from committing the same or other offenses. It does not do this invariably, to be sure, any more than medicines invariably cure. If it were always effective we should of course have no criminals. But without it we should certainly have more. And this fact would be in itself a sufficient justification if no others were forthcoming. Punishment does serve, however, or at any rate can be made to serve another useful function. Properly administered, it tends to work the reformation of the evil doer. Punishment as such, not merely detention in a prison, but any form of punishment, has a direct tendency to awaken the wrong-doer to a sense of the seriousness of his deed. To wrong our neighbor would be impossible if we realized to the full the sufferings we were bringing upon him. We do wrong because we go through the world half asleep; we walk in a kind of mental haze. Punishment has a tendency to wake us up. The boy whose watermelon

was stolen repented of the thefts which he had committed in the same garden. He had never before realized just how loss by theft felt.[4] Similarly punishment may serve as a revelation to us as to how our victim's sufferings felt to him. It may bring home to our consciousness the indignation of others, not merely of the victim but also of the impartial judge, and thus awaken the echo of these emotions in ourselves. It also shows us beyond the possibility of a doubt that in this instance at least the forces that make for righteousness are more powerful than we; hence if we are of the number of those who sincerely respect nothing in the world except power, we may find ourselves respecting the moral law as a seat of power. This may tend to produce a profound change in the attitude of the sinner towards his sin and make a different man of him. It is probable, furthermore, that the orderly and efficient administration of justice has, for precisely these same reasons, a tendency to increase the amount of veneration felt for the moral law in the whole body of citizens, both good and bad alike.

There are other minor ends which may be legitimately served by punishment; but these two are by all odds the most valuable. The first (deterrence) is of special importance in the punishment of the criminal by the state; the second (reformation) is the fundamental consideration which should guide practically all of our punishment of children in the home and the school. The state must deter, whether it succeeds in reforming or not. Our modern courts are in many instances unquestionably making great strides in the direction of humanizing the administration of criminal justice, in consequence of which thousands of evil doers are being restored to society, new men in attitude and spirit. But there are those whom no agency can save. The only thing to do with such people is to lock them up permanently where they will do no harm. For, whether we are successful in reforming our criminals or not, murder and theft must be stopped. Some day we shall learn—perhaps we are learning—that in this field as in others an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. But presumably we shall never be able to dispense entirely

[4] See above, Chapter VI, p. 98.

with the pound of cure; and for the present, at any rate, our clumsy instruments of deterrence will be found to be an indispensable agency for protecting the peace of society. The wrongs done by a child, on the other hand, derive their seriousness ordinarily from the nature of the character which they exhibit and from their reactions upon this character. Hence the supreme importance of reform in these cases as compared with mere deterrence. The essential condition of producing a change in character is that the culprit recognizes the wrongfulness of his deed and the rightfulness of his suffering. When this happens amendment is probable.[5] Otherwise punishment merely hardens the evil doer and makes him more wary.

Our total rejection of revenge, then, does not carry with it the total rejection of punishment. It does, however, involve the denial of the following assertions which have often been repeated in the past and are not unheard today. First, the wrong-doer is wholly or in part outside the pale of the ordinary moral code; we may break faith with him, seize his property, take his life or injure him in any other way in which we feel disposed, without any moral hesitation whatever. This idea, in its essential features, may be found in many young children, who when they actively dislike their teacher, consider themselves entirely justified in disobeying her orders, lying to her, and stealing her possessions. Second, we may inflict suffering upon the bad, or those whom for any other reason we dislike, just for the sake of making them suffer, where no good to themselves or others can be expected to result. Third, the amount of punishment for wrong doing should be determined by the intensity and persistence of our malevolent feelings, instead of by consideration of what is the least amount of suffering that must be inflicted in order to attain the ends of deterrence and reformation. Fourth, there can be no forgiveness until there has been punishment. This principle is especially mischievous when applied without discrimination to the erring child.

[5] For some striking illustrations see William George, *The Junior Republic*, p. 42 ff.; Reeder, *How Two Hundred Children Live and Learn*, pp. 166-169.

### The Sacrifice of the One for the Many

Those who accept the deterrent conception of punishment ought to understand clearly to what they are committed. They are affirming that loss or suffering may rightly be inflicted upon an individual against his will when it is the indispensable means to the attainment of a greater good. Some applications of this principle are very offensive to many people, partly, at least, because they can realize the state of mind, for example, the sufferings of one person more vividly than they can the privations or sufferings of a number. This attitude, however, as we saw in Chapter III, page 43, is very difficult to maintain consistently. I shall now try to show that it is not so much difficult as impossible.

Those who believe, as I find myself compelled to believe, that a physician ought not to give poison to a cancer patient begging for relief from his agony, can only justify their position, in the last resort, on the ground that it is right for the few to be allowed to suffer that many may be saved from premature death through precipitancy, carelessness, or downright murder. Those who believe that the state ought to enforce a contract, thereby hold that it is right to compel a man to fulfil a burdensome obligation for the benefit of another person and in the interest of social security. Those who acquiesce in any form of protective legislation for the economically weaker classes can justify their attitude only on the assumption that the few may be compelled to suffer injury that the lot of the many may be improved. When, for example, a number of years ago, a law was enacted in the State of Illinois limiting the working hours of women to ten per day, a woman who had been serving as cashier in a restaurant wrote a vigorous protest to one of the newspapers. She was a widow and was educating a daughter. She had been able to accomplish her purpose with fair success as long as she held her position. But immediately upon the passage of the law she was replaced by a man, who could work as many hours as he saw fit, and was compelled to accept another kind of employment which carried with it a much lower salary. That the interests of hundreds like her were affected detrimentally by this piece of legis-

lation there can be no doubt. But it has remained on the statute books none the less because the resultant good is generally believed to preponderate over the evil. The truth is that there is probably no such thing as a statute which does not affect adversely the interests of someone. But if this fact is to constitute a bar to legislation, government is at an end.

What many people dislike is in reality not so much the doctrine of the thoroughgoing primacy of the greater good, in itself considered, as certain abuses to which a shallow and perhaps heartless application may lead. This is a real danger. A striking illustration is afforded by the famous Dreyfus case which, a quarter of a century ago, shook the very foundations of the French Republic. In the last decade of the nineteenth century the French army had fallen under the domination of a reactionary and unprincipled clique. One day it was discovered that French military secrets were being sold to Germany. Thereupon those in control, without any warrant whatever, directed suspicion upon a perfectly innocent Jewish officer named Dreyfus. In the ensuing trial before a military tribunal, every safeguard erected by civilization for the protection of the innocent was shamelessly disregarded. In consequence the unfortunate accused was found guilty and sentenced to penal servitude for life. A few years later as the result of the indefatigable labors of several devoted men, the fact was demonstrated that the decision of the court had been based upon forged documents. Thereupon a second trial before a military court was ordered, which complacently accepted a lot of new forged evidence against Dreyfus, and, for a second time, found him guilty, "with extenuating circumstances,"—a weak and absurd compromise. Thereupon the President of the Republic promptly pardoned him. But he was still branded before his country and the world as a traitor. Accordingly his champions refused to acquiesce in the decision, and after years of renewed labor and agitation obtained his complete vindication from the supreme court of France. Every move in the rehabilitation of Dreyfus was fought or condemned both within and outside of the army, not merely by those whose reputations were immediately involved, but by thousands of others, many of them undoubted patriots, who feared that should

the possibility of such a rank miscarriage of justice become a demonstrated fact, the entire French army would be discredited beyond the possibility of recovery, and the power of France to defend herself against her enemies be seriously weakened. What actually happened? The destruction of a plague-spot in the French army, with the consequent restoration of confidence in the military courts and the military authorities. Without this renovation which began only eight years before the opening of the World War, it is questionable whether the French could have retained the morale which enabled them to stand firm at Verdun and the Aisne and finally brought them victory. Clearly in every such situation the most important consideration is the fact that a single rotten apple is likely, sooner or later, to infect the entire contents of the barrel, and that its removal is more important than any other consideration.

The world may learn some day—for the rest of us are not one whit wiser in this matter than the French—that forgery, intimidation, and the concealment of the machinations of wicked men are not and can not be instruments of social welfare. Meanwhile in the face of danger of the abuse of a sound standard I can only insist that there are no fool-proof principles in ethics and that it is only the complete truth that makes you free. It is a contradiction in terms to assert that the intelligent use of the utilitarian standard will lead to more harm than good. In passing upon right and wrong, as in every other situation in life, there exists a moral obligation to be intelligent. This means, among other things, to think not merely of immediate advantage and limited interests, but, as far as may be, to comprehend and realize the whole. This involves concern for the one as well as for the many. In so far as this obligation is met the danger of abuse disappears.

### The Relation of Reflective and Unreflective Ideals of Conduct

It is possible that Colonel Picquart and his associates never thought of the preceding considerations when they began their long and arduous campaign for the liberation and reinstatement of the unfortunate young officer. What moved them may have

been only sympathy for a mistreated fellow being, whom they felt they ought to save. Nevertheless the fruits of their efforts were the cleansing of a foul pest hole which might, in the end, have poisoned the entire life of France. Similarly when the son of a murdered man in some savage tribe, driven by an imperative sense of duty, kills in retaliation the murderer, he is doing his part, though he may not know it, to deter others from committing a similar crime. In the same way, the popular belief that the more excellent deserve better treatment than the less excellent provides everyone with a powerful motive for self-improvement, to the great profit of the community. Finally, that spontaneous special regard for one's family which is the source of the conviction that the near as such have the superior claim, makes on the whole, as we have just seen, for the health and happiness of society.

These facts throw an interesting light upon the way in which nature has built the human mind. For uncounted thousands of years the race has "instinctively" (that is to say, unreflectingly) sympathized with the individual against the community, punished enemies, rewarded excellence, and cherished above all others those who were nearest, in obedience to ideals whose relation to the good of the whole has seldom or never entered the mind. In the course of time theory comes limping along to survey the situation. It finds the human mind so far adjusted to the conditions of existence that the *results* of the actions brought forth by these ideals are on the whole quite satisfactory. Quite satisfactory, but not entirely so. The lay conscience, just in so far as it is unreflective, is undiscriminating, and tends to accept as universal or well-nigh universal, modes of conduct which a careful scrutiny could justify only within certain limits. The function of ethics in the life of the race is (among other things) precisely this: To reveal the fundamental values embodied in the moral life, and in so doing to mark off the boundaries within which alone secondary principles of action are valid.

## Chapter XV

# SOME FARTHER APPLICATIONS OF THE STANDARD TO PRACTICE

### The Duty of Obedience to General Rules

Of the problems raised in Chapters II and III one more remains for consideration. This is the duty of obedience to general rules. We have seen that two very different attitudes are represented in public opinion; one demanding a strict observance, the other permitting a larger or smaller number of exceptions.[1] Which attitude towards general rules is the correct one? Are any exceptions to be permitted? If so, under what circumstances?

No useful answer can be given to these questions until we have made a more nearly complete survey of the indirect effects of actions than has yet been attempted. In Chapter II, page 27, and following, a list was given of those indirect effects of a lie which have been found to be most familiar to University of Wisconsin students in Letters and Science and in the Short Course in Agriculture.[2] We there pointed out that these effects follow upon any form of wrong-doing involving a breach of integrity, as theft, the breaking of a promise or a contract, or even murder. So that the principles derived from the study of unveracity apply over this entire field. We chose lying for our illustration merely because its consequences seemed to be the most easy to trace.

### The Indirect Effects of a Lie

The effects enumerated in Chapter II are undoubtedly not only the most widely recognized but also the most important. In bare enumeration, they were the following: The multiplication of lies through example, through the effects of habit, and

[1] See above, Chapter II, *passim*.

[2] See the author's *Influence of Custom on the Moral Judgment*, p. 127.

through the difficulty of drawing the line, with the consequent tendency to become more and more lax in judgment and consequent practice; loss of confidence in the liar and in other human beings, including the liar's own loss of confidence in his fellow men. Some of these effects turn on the fact of detection; others take place whether the lie is detected or not, because they represent reactions upon the character of the liar, and upon his ability to make moral distinctions.

There are, however, certain other effects which are of sufficient importance to be worthy of our attention. The first is the awakening of the retaliatory desire to pay back the liar in his own coin. This may extend to other members of his class, and in the end, to any member of the human race. This unlovely trait of human nature is perhaps most frequently exemplified among us in the field of petty swindling, as short-changing. But what happens when people find themselves cheated out of their money often happens when they are cheated out of the truth. The opposite, of course, is also the case. "Nobleness enkindles nobleness," in more ways than one. And he who tells the truth under great temptation to lie usually awakens a certain gratitude in the beneficiary which may flow out not merely to the benefactor but also to others who have no other relationship with him than participation in the common nature of man.

Again, in the business world at least and sometimes elsewhere, the detected lie is likely to be met by a counter lie as a weapon of self-defense. A's salesman lies about the goods of a competing firm; B's salesmen are thereupon apt to meet lie with lie, in the attempt to win back the ground that has been lost.

The above consequences flow from the detection of the lie. But a lie has another series of consequences which follow whether it is detected or not. The first is, in many instances, the loss of the confidence of others. This statement no doubt sounds paradoxical; for how, it will be asked, can a man lose confidence when others know nothing of the lie and do not even suspect the liar? The answer is that there are two ways to lose anything. The first is to have it in one's possession and to allow it to pass out of one's possession. The other is to lose the chance to gain possession. A young lawyer might be paid his fee in cash

and lose it through the professional activity of a pickpocket. Or he might lose an equal sum by being away from his office for a day's hunting; the would-be client who finds the door locked going across the hall to the office of a rival. The same is true of confidence. Have we not all seen someone tell the truth under great temptation to lie? When he has told the truth to his own hurt we have said to ourselves: "There is a man who can be depended upon in any circumstances; we can believe him even where the appearances are all against him." Of this accession of confidence everyone robs himself who tells the easy lie in order to get out of a tight place, or in order to gain any other end at the expense of the truth.

We have spoken of the effects of a lie in starting a habit of lying. But there exists in addition a network of other effects upon character. What these are will depend somewhat upon the nature and motive of the lie. Take as an example a lie told to escape the disagreeable consequences which would follow upon the discovery of some action of ours. In this case the liar's unwillingness to face the disagreeable, in other words, his cowardice, tends to infect the entire character. Furthermore the habit of veracity and integrity of character, as a whole, are connected in still another way.

"Truth telling can surely be based only on right living. If we are sympathetic, generous, courageous, just, it will be possible to be open and true. In so far as we are bitter, avaricious, cowardly, self-deceitful, we shall find it hard to be wholly sincere with others. We cannot isolate truthfulness. To demand truth of ourselves is therefore to demand uprightness; thus truth becomes the guardian of our character."[8]

Again, the habitual liar repeatedly fails to tell the truth even when he has nothing to gain by lying; that is to say, he becomes inaccurate in his statements. "He who is always anxious to tell the truth is always anxious to have the truth to tell"; and the reverse holds also. But since in their communication with us, people desire not merely good intentions, but the truth itself, we lose their confidence through our inaccuracies, just as certainly, though perhaps not to the same extent, as through deliberate falsehoods.

[8] Ella Lyman Cabot, *Everyday Ethics*, p. 295.

The lie, whether detected or not, diminishes the amount of confidence existing in the world in another way. It makes it difficult, if not impossible, for the liar to believe in the truthfulness of others. "You cannot believe in honor," writes Bernard Shaw, "until you have achieved it. Better keep yourself clean and bright; you are the window through which you must see the world." A childlike confidence in the complete goodness of every human being is not a desirable equipment for the conduct of life. But the cynical belief that everyone is a liar or a thief is likely to have equally mischievous consequences.

"Be noble, and the nobleness that lies
In other men, sleeping, but never dead
Will rise in majesty to meet thine own."

Men like Thomas Arnold of Rugby have shown that these are the words of sober truth; and while so great an influence as his is not given to many persons, however elevated in character, it is true that excessive suspicion creates no inconsiderable proportion of the treachery and deceit which it fears. The prophet helps to bring his own prophecies to pass.

We may summarize the results of our survey of the indirect effects of lying as follows: Every lie tends to produce more lies, or at any rate more untruths; it tends to undermine the confidence of man in man; and many forms of lying tend to weaken the character as a whole.

Confidence between man and man is the greatest of all social values. This is particularly true in modern society where everyone becomes daily more dependent upon everyone else, and where any important enterprise can be carried on only with the coöperation of a number, often a great number of persons. Men who cannot trust each other prove to be a mere rope of sand when they attempt to work together for a common end. Thus the difference between a community in which such trust exists in a large measure and one in which it is entirely absent is the difference between civilization and anarchy. In fact, the chief hindrance to our entrance upon a form of social existence far higher than any we have ever known is the untrustworthiness which by constantly creating suspicion is constantly dividing man from man.

### Is a Lie Ever Permissible?

We are now prepared to consider the question whether one may ever lie. The first point to notice is that the question should always be put in the form, not, "May I lie?" but, "Must I lie?" For even a lie that, in the end, we may have to pronounce justifiable has many of the same effects as the worst lie. A man overworks to save himself from bankruptcy and thus keep his family from starvation. His action may be justifiable under the circumstances, and his motives are undoubtedly the best; but the effects of the breakdown in health will be just as serious for all that. Much the same thing is true of lying. You will normally have to pay for your lie, whatever your motives in telling it may be. Commonly, others must pay for it also, in one way or another; whether in lessened confidence, in being subjected to more lies, and of course, in failure to adjust themselves properly to the situation before them because they had been led by false statements to mistake some of its features. A man of very mediocre ability was superintendent of schools in a small town where, owing to certain exceptional circumstances, he fitted so well that he was receiving perhaps one-third more salary than he could have earned anywhere else. He might have remained there indefinitely if he had not in an evil day applied for a position in a larger town carrying a higher salary. The clerk of the school board informed him that the reason for his rejection was that he was not a university graduate,—finding it easier to tell a lie that could not give offense than to tell an unpleasant truth. As a result of this lie he resigned his position and entered a university. Unprovided with adequate means of support, and with a family dependent upon him, he remained for the two years necessary to obtain the bachelor's degree, and then, finding no position equal to his old one, he remained one year longer as a graduate student. After the whole family had endured serious hardships which left permanent traces upon the health of the wife, the man finally found himself forced to accept a position paying actually less than the one which he had abandoned.

Only that kind of a fool, then, who supposes himself able to beat the laws of human life and get something for nothing will

lie with a light heart and an easy conscience. This does not mean that one must never lie. I myself, at least, cannot do otherwise than justify "the lie that withholds the story of a repented wrong from the scandal monger who would wreck the happiness of a home by peddling it abroad." [4] This is one of those unhappy cases involving a conflict of duties where harm is inevitable whichever way we turn. But what we are bound to do when we find ourselves in a situation of this kind is to count carefully the costs before we attempt to deceive any human being, and never to allow ourselves to fall into the sentimental notion that the costs for self or others will ever fall to, or even near the zero line. The burden of proof is thus always on him who claims that he is justified in lying; and he is practically always mistaken.

"Truth speaking," to quote Mrs. Cabot once more, "is not a recipe for making life easy, but for making it worth while; and anyone who had thoroughly tested the results of frank, accurate, reliable speech and action will never want to go back to the vitiated air of lying." [5]

We have been studying the problem of loyalty to general rules by an examination of the concrete effects of obedience and disobedience to a single one. What holds of veracity will be found to hold for the other general rules of morality accepted in civilized society.

### The Bearing of the Preceding Conclusions Upon Theory

The preceding analysis contains the reply to certain objections sometimes urged against the standard formulated at the close of the eighth chapter. A lie, an act of theft, a breach of contract, it may be asserted, is wrong even though it does a great deal of good. Thus Saint Crispin stole leather from a rich merchant to make shoes for poor children; but his conduct, however well intentioned, must be condemned. A man contracts with an immensely wealthy corporation to take, at a stipulated time, a certain amount of goods which it manufactures. The market falls, and if he sticks to his agreement he will be ruined; while if he

[4] William DeWitt Hyde, *The College Man and the College Woman*, p. 109.

[5] *Op. cit.*, p. 294. The recognition of this fact is the high point in Eugene O'Neill's *Anna Christie*.

refuses to do so the manufacturing organization will scarcely feel the loss. Nevertheless he should keep his word. The answer to such objections should now be evident without farther discussion. In all such situations, there are two parties concerned: the immediate participants, and the community as a whole. The obligation to a strict veracity, respect for one's given word, and for the property of others can only be understood when these latter interests, vital in the life of every one of us, are taken into account.

Herewith is supplied the key to a second difficulty. Our standard is supposed by some persons to require the acceptance of that malodorous maxim, "The end justifies the means." The end, let us say, is the relief from anxiety of the members of a family, one of whose number is sick unto death; or the saving from humiliation of an applicant for a position whose unfitness compels you to reject him; or the success at the polls of the grand old (Republican or Democratic) party. Applied to any one of these highly desirable ends the maxim, as commonly interpreted, directs you to lie if the lie is likely to result in attainment. In view of the study just completed, any lengthy discussion of this proposal is unnecessary. The lie, let us assume, will have one effect which is entirely good. But as we have just seen, it may be counted upon to have many others which are bad. The effects upon our characters are as unescapable as gravitation; and some of them are quite independent of our motives. Other effects are almost equally inevitable if we lie not merely in this situation but in future situations just like it. And those future situations, of course, may be expected to exert upon our will exactly the same pressure as this one—only more.

The following incident may perhaps serve as the *reductio ad absurdum* of this maxim. A burglar, on entering a room in a Parisian apartment house, found there a woman weeping. He learned that her husband had just died after a long illness which had eaten up all their savings, and that the hard-hearted landlord was intending to throw her and her effects out into the street the next morning. Thereupon the chivalrous and indignant burglar rushed to the apartment where the landlord lay sleeping and murdered him in his bed. If the murder of the landlord would

give the widow a week's respite from eviction, those who believe that any end justifies any means would be logically bound to applaud. I venture to believe that they would hesitate before going so far.

The flaw in the maxim lies in the fact that it directs attention to a single effect in which we happen to be interested, and ignores a great body of other effects which may be far more important. There is indeed one end which justifies all means—the most complete attainable welfare of all who are directly or indirectly concerned. But this, seen in its proper light, gives no authorization for playing fast and loose with general rules, as the maxim, at least in its common interpretation, seems to permit.

### The Doctrine of Natural Rights

The contents of this and the preceding Chapter are intended to suggest the results of the application of the standard of Universalistic Utilitarianism (Chapter II, page 36), as developed in Chapters VIII and IX, to the concrete problems of conduct. The meaning and significance of this standard will perhaps appear more clearly if it is contrasted with what was for more than a century, and until quite recently, a very formidable rival in certain fields. This rival is known as the Doctrine of Natural Rights. An examination of this theory will also serve to bring before us a certain class of mistakes in moral judgments which we have not yet explicitly described.

The Doctrine of Natural Rights states the demands of morality in terms of rights. In order to understand it, therefore, we must begin by defining a *right*.

Moral rights are the offspring of duties and can be understood only when seen in their relation to the latter. A right is always the correlative of a duty. This is to say, the rights of A as against B are the duties of B against A. To possess a right thus means that I am the object of the duty of another person to act or to forbear from acting in a certain way. For example, if A contracts to paint my house, the painting of the house becomes his duty and my right. After the work has been done, the payment of the amount agreed upon becomes my duty and his right. If I have a moral right to the possession of a piece of property, then your

duty is to forbear from trespassing, and otherwise to leave it alone except as I am willing to allow you to use or enjoy it. If I have a right to walk the streets, then it is your duty to forbear from preventing me from doing so. The individual can of course have a right, not merely as against other individuals, but as against the community taken as a whole. For example, the assertion on my part of the right to work in a factory ten hours per day would in practice mean the claim that the community in its organized capacity as a state ought not to compel me to cut my working day to eight or nine hours against my will.*

The Doctrine of Natural Rights purports to state the fundamental rights which belong to all men in virtue of their common nature as human beings. These rights are declared to be self-evident, which, if it means anything, can only mean discoverable without the need of a careful examination of consequences. They are also asserted to be inalienable or absolute, that is to say, such that a man can not be justly deprived of them on any grounds whatever. This theory grew up in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a protest against the powers and privileges of the absolute monarchs of the age and the lesser systems of privileges which were the possession of the nobility. It had no official spokesman, and its adherents did not constitute, in the proper sense of the term, a school with its own creed and its own standards of orthodoxy. It represented rather a spirit of protest against age-long abuses which were due to the seizure of the good things of life by the powerful few, with no adequate recognition on their part of any correlative duties to the less fortunate classes; leaving the world's burdens, including the heavy burdens which their own manner of life entailed, to be carried by the many. This situation certainly involved a deprivation of fundamental rights, and it was these rights which the doctrine in question undertook to formulate.

Since we are dealing not with a school but with a point of view common to a great number of otherwise widely divergent modes of thought, it is impossible to draw up a list of the funda-

*See Notes, XV, "Rights and Duties as Correlative," p. 514.

mental rights of man which would have been accepted by all the adherents of the doctrine. But the following list includes what were most frequently adduced as representing such rights. (1) Everyone has an inalienable right to life. (2) Everyone has an inalienable right to liberty, limited only by the equal right to liberty possessed by everyone else. This means, everyone ought to be allowed to do what he wills provided he does not thereby infringe upon the equal freedom of any other man. (3) Governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. (4) Everyone has an inalienable right to the fruits of his labor. (5) In addition, there usually appeared some demand with regard to equality.

If the reader has accepted the position of the preceding Chapters he will not have to be told that neither rights nor duties can be discovered without considering consequences; and that no rights are inalienable in the sense that they represent what a person is entitled to have or to do or to require from others regardless of the best interests of society as a whole. From this fact, however, it by no means follows that the above formulas are worthless. On the contrary, they represent profound and fruitful truths exaggerated into absurd and dangerous errors by a failure to note the limitations within which alone they are valid. They were directed against the exploitation of men by their kings and nobles, and they meant to assert that equality of consideration which we have seen to be the very essence of the moral judgment (see above, Chapter VIII, page 140). They ended, however, by asserting the supremacy of the interests of the individual over those of the community, which belongs to the very essence of immorality. The truth of this estimate will appear if we analyze each of them in turn.

### The Right to Life

"Everyone has an inalienable right to life." Obedience to this rule would mean the abandonment of conscription as a means of national defense in time of war. I do not mean to discuss this question. American public opinion expressed itself unequivocally on this subject in 1917, and I agree with its judgment.

### The Right to Liberty

"Everyone ought to be allowed to do what he wills, provided he does not thereby infringe upon the equal freedom of any other man." This principle derives its chief significance for American life from the fact that for the past sixty years it has been widely used by certain of our courts as the measure of that liberty of which, according to our state and Federal constitutions, no one may be deprived without due process of law.[6] Unquestionably it is, broadly speaking, a good rule for adults of intelligence and character, especially in their dealings with their equals in economic and political power. But as it stands it would legitimate my attempt to steal from you provided you were not thereby prevented from attempting to steal from me or anyone else. And it would forbid the state making laws to prevent the exploitation of child labor or the imposition by employers of hours of labor or other working conditions injurious to the health and other vital interests of the worker. For according to this view the state has no right to forbid me to work twelve hours a day unless I thereby prevent someone else from working the same length of time. Whereas according to the best thought of today, as I believe, it is one of the most important functions of the state to set the lower limits of competition; that is, to protect the laborer from being forced by his economic weakness in comparison with the employer into a contract to work under conditions seriously injurious to his welfare.[7]

### The Consent of the Governed

Similarly with the maxim: Governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. It will follow from our position that governments derive their just powers, in the last resort, from their relationship to the *good* of the governed. The attempt to found the moral authority of the state upon consent doubtless arose from the conviction that a man is always the best judge of his own interests, so that his consent to a

[6] See *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 19, p. 589.

[7] *Cf.* Sidney Webb, "The Necessary Basis of Society," *Contemporary Review*, Vol. 93, p. 658.

given form of government may be taken as a sign that it is the most effective instrument available for the attainment of his good. This conviction, however, is hardly more than half true. Hence the maxim is a very dangerous one when applied indiscriminately, as President Wilson apparently proposed to apply it at Versailles.

The difference between these two views of the authority of government can be illustrated by the attitude of each towards Philippine independence. According to the Doctrine of Natural Rights, the Filipinos should be granted independence the moment they desire it. All questions as to their fitness for the task of self-government are entirely irrelevant. Even if it could be proved that the consequences of this grant would be the plunging of the country into anarchy, or the enthronement of unexampled inefficiency and corruption, this fact should not be allowed to influence the decision in the slightest degree. According to the rival view, on the other hand, if the United States has been ruling wisely and justly it should not abandon the Filipinos to themselves until there exists a fair presumption of their capacity to conduct with success a stable government. This means, in the concrete, that we should give the Filipinos complete self-government only after elementary education has become widespread, after the people have gained adequate political experience through participation in the work of local self-government, after some unity of spirit has made itself felt (which will probably be developed mainly through the creation of railroad and steamship lines by American capital, and the introduction of the English language as the universal medium of communication), and after they have demonstrated the possession of the intellectual and moral qualities requisite for the operation and maintenance of a government essentially as good as that which they propose to abandon. We try, in other words, to take into account all the interests concerned, and ask what form of government will affect them, on the whole most favorably; not forgetting, by any means, the very important interest of development of capacity. The advocates of the former doctrine, on the other hand, ask only one question: "Do the majority of the Filipinos want to govern themselves?"

### The Right to the Fruits of One's Labor

That everyone has a right to the fruits of his labor is true as against any and every irresponsible autocrat, such as an eighteenth century French noble, who, in the plentitude of his power and for his own selfish interests, reaped where another had sown. In fact, it holds against every parasite, from king to tramp. But if we look at the problem from another angle we shall see that the matter may have a very different aspect. Suppose that when Robinson Crusoe's ship was wrecked, two sailors, instead of one, had succeeded in reaching the immortal island, and that, in escaping, one had been so seriously injured as to be permanently crippled. He could, we will assume, do a certain amount of work; but with his best efforts the fruits of his labor would still be small. What, then, is the principle of division which Robinson Crusoe ought to apply? According to the maxim before us, Crusoe had no obligation whatever to serve his companion. Each was entitled to the results of the labor of his body and the work of his hands; and a fair division would have been one made on this basis. If, therefore, they contributed to their common stock of goods in the ratio of ten to one, these goods ought to have been divided on a ten to one basis. If in consequence the crippled sailor died of starvation that was a matter that did not concern Crusoe in the least. Let justice be done, though the heavens fall.

Now as we have seen abundantly such a conception of the boundaries of obligation is thoroughly false. We have indeed the right of self-defense as against the parasites that would suck up like a sponge all that we have to give and would then ask for more. But assuming equal readiness on the part of all others to do their best, my duty is to do my best also for those who are within the range of my actions. And I ought to be willing to accept as my share of the products of our common labor so much and only so much as it is socially desirable that I should possess. This principle is expressed in the famous words of Louis Blanc: "The state ought to be regarded as one family, in which all shall work according to their ability and receive according to their needs."

The right to retain the fruits of one's labor for one's own

personal enjoyment is supposed to form the basis of our present economic system. If this right is not absolute, is the correlative economic system utterly without moral justification? By no means. The consciousness of the duty to serve one's fellows, which is very much alive in many primitive societies, has to a great extent faded out in the larger communities which are characteristic of the higher civilizations. In order to get the world's work done it is therefore necessary to offer special inducements. The most effective way to obtain results would be to pay the worker in proportion to his industry, because industry, being a matter of the will, can be influenced by the lure of reward. But the fruits of one's labor are determined by four factors: industry (and kindred virtues, such as perseverance), intellectual ability, physical vigor, and luck; and unfortunately it is impossible to separate their effects. Accordingly, in order to stimulate the first, we have to permit men to reap the profits which are due to the other three also. Payment for service, then, by allowing each worker to appropriate the fruits of his own labor, is merely a device—and a somewhat clumsy and wasteful device—for bringing into existence an adequate supply of economic goods.

Our industrial system, like all the other institutions of society, must be judged by its results. And these results are to be measured by the amount of goods it yields, the manner in which they get distributed in society, and the kind of human beings which it tends to produce. An adequate discussion of its excellences and defects is impossible in this place. All I can undertake to say here is that while, as far as I can see, the competitive principle is at present an indispensable agency of production, there is nothing sacred about it. By this I mean that no one has an absolute title to the fruits of his labor as against some other more satisfactory system of production and distribution, if it can be devised. Conditions might conceivably arise under which our whole system of economic rewards could be abandoned. For if there existed a higher order of devotion to the public welfare, if all men were willing to be loyal to the dictum of Comte that we ought to regard the exercise of our vocations as a public duty, some closer approach to equality of income could replace the

present sorry scheme of things, with its empty and demoralizing luxury at one end of the scale and life on the edge of the abyss at the other. Accordingly, moves in this direction which are genuinely useful (*i.e.*, which do not threaten to cut down seriously the amount of production and which will actually lead to the removal of unnecessary inequalities) ought not to be suppressed in the supposed interests of justice.[8]

This statement, of course, does not mean that the state, in the interests of a more equable distribution of wealth, may help itself to private property without in some way compensating the owners. There can be no such thing as civilized society without confidence. The state now recognizes and professes to protect private possessions obtained in accordance with certain rules which represent what it regards as fair dealing. It may therefore take away that which has been acquired in reliance upon this implied promise of protection on its part, only upon due compensation. The statement of the text means that the state is at liberty to give notice of a change in the rules of acquisition if at any time this step seems clearly desirable.

### Equality

The demand for equality may take a great variety of directions: equality before the law; equality of political power; equality of wealth; equality of opportunity to gain wealth or other ends of human endeavor; equality of taxation; in short, equal distribution of anything that is regarded either as valuable, or as a necessary evil.

Morality, as we have seen, involves an equal regard for equal interests. If justice be defined as equality, then the whole of the moral code may be regarded as nothing but one form or another of justice. This shows why the demand for equality (or justice) is so deeply embedded in human nature.

But the demand for equal regard for equal interests is constantly passing over into the demand for the equal treatment of unequal interests. This means the demand for the same treat-

[8] I have dealt with this subject at greater length in an article in the *International Journal of Ethics* for July, 1920. For a general discussion of the relation of merit and reward the reader may consult Rashdall, *The Theory of Good and Evil*, Vol. I, pp. 243-262.

ment of different persons, regardless of its effects upon the sum total of the interests involved. A favorite form is the claim that a man shall not be allowed to enjoy a certain good unless it is possible for everyone else to share it with him. An illustration of this attitude is the following. In a "Note to the Reader," prefixed to one of the later editions of a once famous book, *Astrotheology*, first published in 1715, the author, Mr. Derham, wrote:

> "Notwithstanding that a book is more complete and valuable by additions and amendments yet I think that many and great additions are a hardship and injustice to the purchasers of a former edition; and therefore I have in this and the foregoing editions avoided it as much and as well as I could, although some of my learned friends would have persuaded me to it, and also contributed their observations."

The aim here of course is to avoid inequalities of service as between the readers of the first and later editions.

Another example of the same attitude comes from "business-like" America, and from the twentieth century instead of the eighteenth. In a certain Wisconsin city, a few years ago, a public-spirited citizen offered to build and equip a fine gymnasium for the school in his ward at his own expense. The sapient board of education refused the offer on the ground that it would be "unfair" (unequal) for the pupils of that school to have a privilege which the pupils of the other schools did not enjoy.

Similarly some Socialists have demanded equality in the distribution of wealth regardless of its effect upon production; that is to say, upon the amount to be distributed. Baboeuf, one of the early leaders of the movement, said: "Let all the arts [*i.e.*, of civilization] perish if need be, provided we retain real equality" [of income].

The standard adopted in Chapter VIII will show us what ought to be our attitude towards the problems thus raised. Equal interests ought to be treated equally. It follows that unequal interests ought to be treated unequally. Where the attempt to treat persons equally, as, for example, in the distribution of political power or wealth, will result in a diminution in the amount of human well-being as a whole, the greater set of interests is being sacrificed to the less; in other words, unequal interests are

being treated as if they were equal. Thus in dealing with the problem of distribution of political power it is one-sided and unfair to take into account merely the desires of a given class or group for the consciousness of power, and to ignore the effects which the granting of such power is likely to produce upon other interests. Precisely the same thing is true with regard to the distribution of wealth. If an equal distribution would result, through a diminution of the amount to be distributed, in bringing everyone down to the level of the lowest tenth, no one would be better off, and nine-tenths of the population would have a smaller income. All interests which these larger incomes satisfy would be sacrificed, in the last resort, either to a mere name, or to a form of malevolence, namely, envy. A man was informed by a physician that one of his sons was going blind and nothing could be done to prevent it. Thereupon he tore up the will by which his property had been divided equally between his sons (his wife being dead), and left everything to this one child. This man knew the difference between genuine and counterfeit equality.

### Applying a Rule Beyond Its Raison d'Être

This discussion of an ancient, famous, and enormously influential doctrine is not intended to be anything other than cursory, because it is not presented for its own sake. It has been introduced partly for the purpose of clarifying the position of its rival, the utilitarian standard, partly as an example of a class of mistakes not specifically dealt with in Chapter VIII. These mistakes are sufficiently serious to deserve our careful attention.

No two of the principles which we have just been examining owe their origin to precisely the same mental processes, but all have one fault in common. Each is a formula which represents the valid standard of right with fair accuracy within certain limits, but does not apply beyond those limits. The Doctrine of Natural Rights fails to note the existence of those boundaries and treats what is in fact a secondary principle as if it were an ultimate one. The essential nature of the error involved, which is known as applying a rule beyond its *raison d'être*, comes out very clearly in the following question and answer.

A century or more ago a shipload of emigrants was wrecked upon an uninhabited island in the Pacific far from all trade routes. There they and their descendants lived for many years, unvisited by other men, until finally a ship appeared and carried them away to Europe. At that time there was in their prison a man under sentence to be hanged for murder. Is the community, before breaking up, its members to scatter to different parts of the world, bound to hang the murderer or are they at liberty to set him free? It being understood that while the murder was in every respect unjustifiable, it was committed under circumstances which give no grounds for the fear that the murderer, if freed, would ever commit another similar crime.

"Hanging is justifiable for at least two reasons: [1] It removes the possibility of further crime being committed by that person; [2] It sets an example to others. The second reason seems to operate in the given case, and we should conclude that hanging would be justifiable for that reason."

A moment's consideration will show that the second reason does *not* operate in the given case. If an inhabitant of the island should make his home in England, for example, the freeing of this murderer would not lead him to expect that he would have the same good fortune if he should commit a murder on British soil. For he would know that this act of grace was due to a circumstance which could never be repeated in his new environment, namely, the departure of all his fellow-citizens to other parts of the world and the consequent disappearance of the society of which they had been members. The principle of deterrence may be sound enough, but like every derived principle it is applicable only under certain conditions. The one rule of action which is true unconditionally is that which bids us aim in all our actions to realize the greatest attainable amount of good. The failure explicitly to recognize this fact is the fundamental flaw in the Doctrine of Natural Rights. The same kind of mistake is being made every day in the week, alike by the uneducated and educated.

## Chapter XVI

# TWO TYPES OF ETHICAL THEORY

Before turning to the problem of the good I wish to point out the relation between the view of the moral judgment that has been here presented and certain classical theories of the subject. This procedure will enable us to see the doctrines of this book in their historical setting and thereby gain some additional insight into their significance. It will also afford an opportunity to formulate the reasons which have led me to reject certain famous and influential ethical systems.

### The Classification of Ethical Theories

Theories of right may be classified according to the solution they propose for either of the two fundamental problems, the content of the standard, and the source of the standard in the mind.

The leading theories of the standard are three in number. First there is Utilitarianism. This holds that moral judgments pronounce conduct right or wrong according to its relation as cause to the welfare of conscious beings, as effect.[1] Utilitarianism does not necessarily deny the intrinsic value of character. On the contrary the existence of such value is a fundamental factor in the systems of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, both of whom are orthodox Utilitarians; and a careful reader will discover it without difficulty in the writings of Hume. What Utilitarianism maintains is that intrinsic excellence can not serve as the criterion of right and wrong; in other words the immediate attractiveness of conduct does not as such determine its rightness.

A second theory may be termed Æsthetic. The word *æsthetic* is here used in a large sense. It is meant to cover all the judgments which form the subject matter of Chapter X. The most influential representatives of this point of view are Aristotle

[1] See above Chapter II, especially page 35 f.

and the Stoics. Neither of these systems is purely æsthetic; each contains a very considerable Utilitarian element. But since their characteristic feature—that which distinguishes them from others —is the use of the æsthetic element in character as the measure of right and wrong conduct, they may properly be called Æsthetic theories.

A third system or congeries of systems denies that the rightness of an action has any necessary relation to its value, whether extrinsic or intrinsic. To lie, for example, is wrong. This is not due to the fact that a lie has harmful effects upon its victim or society at large. It is not due to the immediate repulsiveness of the liar, and thus of the practice of lying. All that can and need be said is that lying is wrong in itself. Curiously enough the school which holds these views, although it has played a very important rôle in the history of ethics, has no name which designates accurately its characteristic feature. I should like to call theories of this type anaxiotic. *Axios* is the Greek word for valuable; *a* or *an*, serving as a prefix, means "absence of." However, for reasons which will appear presently, I shall yield to a usage which has become very deeply ingrained and, like everyone else, call them by the misleading name of Intuitionistic.

Again, theories of ethics may be classified according to their conception of the source of the standard in the human mind. Here there are two leading rivals in the field. I shall call them Rationalism and Voluntarism respectively. The former places the source of the distinction between right and wrong in the intuitions of reason; the latter in some element or elements of what may be termed "will." "Will" is here used in a broad sense to include all those mental elements which, when joined to ideas of possible results, contribute to the production of voluntary action.

In the present and in the following Chapter, I shall try to present the principal features of each of these two sets of theories. In order to be as concrete as possible I shall to a considerable extent deal with individual representatives of the different points of view. I shall make no attempt however to sketch any one man's system as a whole. My sole aim is to present a picture of certain important types of thought, and I shall use individual

moralists in so far as they serve this purpose and drop them when they are no longer needed.

In the presentation immediately before us I shall use theories of the standard as the basis of classification. The next Chapter will be devoted to Utilitarianism; the present one will deal with the most significant non-Utilitarian systems.

## I

### Intuitionism

One of the great historical theories of modern times is that which is commonly called Intuitionism. This name, taken as the designation of an account of the moral standard, is an unfortunate one, since it is derived from a certain conception of the source of the moral judgment. And this conception is shared, as will be shown in the following Chapter, by a number of Utilitarians. The proper title for this point of view is, as suggested just above, anaxiotic. But the name Intuitionistic has probably come to stay. Furthermore, while it is not true that all Intuitionistic theories are anaxiotic, it is a fact that practically all anaxiotic systems are in the large sense of the term Intuitionistic. They are thus, so to speak, the Intuitionists *par excellence.* In view of this situation I shall use the traditional terminology—but under protest.

The founders of this school flourished at Cambridge University at the beginning of modern ethical investigation in Europe, in the latter half of the seventeenth century. Their writings received form and content in large measure from their opposition to two great streams of thought which were very popular among their educated and half-educated contemporaries. One of these movements was Egoistic Utilitarianism. It was represented most effectively at that time by Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), a vigorous and able man, who may be said to have started the systematic study of ethics in the modern world. Egoistic Utilitarianism is the outcome of an attempt to derive the phenomena of morality from the proposition that the sole motive of human action is the desire for personal pleasure. In the course of this

adventure right gets defined as obedience to a command whether of God, the state, or public opinion—a command which derives all its drive from the fear of Hell, the penitentiary, or social ostracism.

The other movement which aroused the Cambridge philosophers to action was Subjectivism. This had no supporters among the moralists of the period; indeed the systematic defense of this position has had to wait, in the modern world, for the coming of our own generation.[2] The seventeenth century scholars were acquainted with it through the fragmentary reports which had come down to them of the teachings of certain Greek thinkers commonly known as skeptics. But Subjectivism had long before obtained a popular advocate in the French writer Montaigne, whose *Essays,* first published in 1580, had for generations an enormous vogue. Since then, in one form or another, it has always had a considerable following.

Subjectivism is not a special type of ethical theory in the sense in which the term may be applied, for example, to Intuitionism. This is to say, it is not a system offering or attempting to offer a consistent and closely knit set of solutions for all the fundamental problems of right and wrong. The essence of Subjectivism is the denial of the objectivity of moral distinctions, and any theory which takes this position is *ipso facto* Subjectivistic. In addition most Subjectivists hold a particular theory of the meaning of right and the source of moral distinctions. But they need not do so; and, in fact, many writers on ethical matters who can only be classified as Subjectivists have no opinions whatever with regard to this latter topic.

Those Subjectivists who have tried to think through the problems of right and wrong to the end commonly formulate their position in the two following propositions. (1) When I call an action right I am expressing nothing more than the fact that the sight or thought of this action arouses in my mind a certain

[2] Westermarck's *The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas* (1st Edition, 1906) is the most extensive treatment of ethics in the English language from the Subjectivist point of view. The eighteenth century Rationalists regarded Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Hume as Subjectivists; with what justice, we shall see in the following chapter.

emotion (or "feeling"). (2) There is no unity of emotional endowment in the race, some men feeling one way and others feeling very differently about precisely the same action. A, for example, is attracted by the idea of revenge; to B, on the other hand, it is abhorrent. Under these conditions revenge is for A entirely justified; for B, on the other hand, it would be wrong. And this is the end of the matter.

It was these two views, Egoistic Utilitarianism and Subjectivism, that Intuitionism tried to confute by building up a system resting upon an entirely different foundation. What it was particularly concerned to show was that morality does not have its source in the emotions or any other "feelings" of the human mind, nor in fear of penalties of whatever sort. Its ultimate source, on the contrary, is in the "nature of things": that is to say, in the essential structure of human relationships, which is what it is, whether anybody happens to believe it to be such or otherwise, and whether he likes it or not. These relationships are made known to us by reason, an infallible power of the mind which apprehends certain kinds of truth directly without the necessity of any appeal to observation. Hence it follows that moral distinctions are objective, not subjective. That is to say, they hold for everyone, like any other form of truth; so that there can be no mistaken opinions about the fundamental demands of the moral law.

These views were developed by a number of British writers of whom Joseph Butler (1692-1752) and Richard Price (1723-1791) were the most eminent. The former was the more original, and made the more important contributions to ethics. But as they were set forth chiefly in sermons they were unsystematic in form and dealt with special problems. Price was the great systematizer. He saw clearly and fully what is involved in the very nature of an Intuitionistic theory of ethics, and proceeded to work it out into a consistent whole, as far as the nature of stubborn facts would permit. His is the first treatise which gives us anything like a well-rounded picture of such a system. It is not merely the first in time; it is also, in many respects, the best in quality. Intuitionism of the type of Price was for a century the orthodox moral theory of our American colleges and universities.

### The Source of Moral Distinctions

The Intuitionistic account of our moral standards is quite unintelligible without an understanding of its views as to the source of the moral judgment. This is Rationalistic in nature, as this term was defined above, p. 305. Ethical Rationalism, in its turn, is, if not the direct outcome of, at least very intimately related with, a certain theory of knowledge and of the intellectual powers by which knowledge is gained. According to this view the mind possesses the power to see intuitively or directly certain universal principles which lie at the foundation of all our knowledge. By *intuitively* is meant, independently of observation or of inference from previous experience. These we recognize as true, immediately upon their presentation to the mind, with a strength of conviction that nothing can ever shake. Examples of such axioms, or self-evident truths, are: "If equals be added to equals, the sums will be equal;" "Of two contradictory propositions both cannot be true;" "Every event must have a cause." An eminent representative of this school, Thomas Reid, states this position as follows:

> [Self-evident] "propositions [are those] which are no sooner understood than they are believed. The judgment [*i.e.*, the belief] follows the apprehension of them necessarily, and both are equally the work of nature and the result of our original powers. There is no searching for evidence, no weighing of arguments: the proposition is not deduced or inferred from another; it has the light of truth in itself, and has no occasion to borrow it from another." [3]

Applying this conception of reason to the field of ethics most Intuitionists hold that there are moral principles, such as "Veracity is right," which are, in like manner, self-evident. We perceive their truth as clearly and certainly as we see the truth of an axiom of arithmetic or geometry. That power or faculty of the mind by which we apprehend self-evident truths is called "reason." In so far as reason makes us aware of our duties, that is, reveals to us moral truths, it may be called "practical reason," or "conscience." Of course no one believes that babies are born thinking to themselves: "Honesty is right," any more

[3] *On the Intellectual Powers,* Essay VI, Ch. IV.

than they are born saying to themselves: "If equals be added to equals the sums will be equal." What is meant is, that the mind is so constructed that, on developing to the point where it can understand the meaning of such propositions, it necessarily assents to their truth immediately upon hearing them.

From the way in which this knowledge arises it follows that it is universal, that is, accepted by everyone, like the mathematical axioms. I may therefore appeal to the conscience of all other men with complete assurance that its utterances will agree with those of my own, and that they will thus acknowledge, in fundamentals, the same obligations that I do. Hence the ultimate principles of morals recognized by the lay conscience hold for every human being without exception. It follows also that, with regard to these fundamentals, there can be no difference between what we believe to be right and what is really right, because the former and the latter are always and everywhere identical.

On this view all mistakes in moral judgments are due merely to our failure to recognize a given action as a case belonging under one of our axioms, such as that of justice or veracity. Thus a guard at a railroad crossing at which a terrible accident had taken place one night, testified in court that he had swung his lantern in front of the oncoming automobile; but he omitted to state that, in consequence of his carelessness, the lantern was not lighted. If he made this declaration with a perfectly good conscience, Intuitionism would explain his moral obtuseness by claiming that while he unquestionably knew it is wrong to lie, he did not understand the nature of a lie; that is, he did not see that it consists essentially in the attempt to create in another person, by whatever means, a belief which you yourself do not share. His error, therefore, lay, not in believing it right to lie but in supposing he had not lied.

### The Meaning of Right

We now turn to the Intuitionistic definition of the meaning of right. The standard view of this school was first stated explicitly by Richard Price in his *Review of the Principal Questions in Morals,* published in 1758. According to him right is an

unanalyzable concept, a concept in other words, that can no more be defined than the terms *similarity* or *red*. We can tell by immediate experience what it stands for, we can feel within us the authoritative demand it makes upon our will, regardless of our comfort, pleasure, or profit; but these things can neither be described nor defined because they are ultimate and thus irreducible to anything else. To define, for example, the word *vertebrate*, is to analyze, to separate the idea into its parts; as an animal having a spinal cord and a body approximately bilaterally symmetrical. But the *concept* right has no parts, is made up of no elements found elsewhere in our experience. Therefore, no definition is possible. Furthermore, no definition is necessary. Look within, and the meaning of *right* in the sentence: "It is right to pay your debts," will reveal itself to you as directly as the meaning of *red* in "The American flag contains the color red," or the meaning of *similar* or *like*, in the sentence, "these two coins look like each other."

### Whewell's Account of the Moral Standard

According to Intuitionism, as we have seen, the moral code is a revelation of reason. Since the fundamental dictates of morality are thus self-evident, are known directly without the necessity of inference or an appeal to experience, and are common to the race, one would suppose it would be an easy matter to formulate them. Nevertheless the representatives of this school have had great difficulty in performing this task in such a way as to satisfy any large number of their fellow moralists. One of the most carefully elaborated expositions of the rules of morality prepared by any member of this school is that which we owe to the English philosopher Whewell (1794-1866). It will be found in his *Elements of Morality*, Book II, Chapter ii. It reduces the requirements of the moral law to five special axioms which represent the insights of reason applied to human relations in the same sense in which the axioms of geometry may be supposed to represent the insights of reason applied to space. His list reads as follows:

1. Benevolence: "Man is to be loved as man;"
2. Justice: "Each man is to have his own;"
3. Veracity: "We must speak the truth;"

4. Purity: "The lower parts of our nature are to be governed by the higher;"
5. Order: "We must accept positive laws as the necessary conditions of morality."

Whewell does not affirm that these five cardinal virtues actually cover the whole of morality. But they are at any rate "the main elements in that notion of goodness which all mankind admire, esteem, and love."

Certain of these principles demand a few words of explanation. In his formula for benevolence, Whewell intends that the word *love* shall be taken literally, as an emotional outpouring of the same nature, though not necessarily of the same intensity, as that which a mother feels for her child. In criticizing his theory it would not be fair to lay upon it any such incubus. He undoubtedly borrowed the word *love* from the language of the Gospels, as translated into English. But the requirement of the Gospels in its relation to man is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor *as thyself*." To love one's self, in the sense of feeling affection for self, is, however, impossible. Love therefore in this connection must mean not affection but desire to serve; and a loyal disciple of Whewell, acting as the defender of his general position, might demand with perfect propriety that it be not interpreted to mean anything more. Whewell's mistake doubtless lay in identifying love and altruism, a mistake which was criticized in Chapter V. With regard to veracity he inadvertently makes it include the keeping of promises, agreements, and contracts. This is an arbitrary identification, but one not fatal to the system; for a modern disciple could easily meet criticism by formulating a special axiom for promises and adding it to the list. Finally, the principle of order expresses the obligation to obey the laws of the city or the state, or the commands of legally constituted authority.

In order fully to understand the significance of Whewell's "five commandments," we must note that moralists of his type absolutely repudiate the doctrine that the rightness of conduct is determined fundamentally by the interests of society. They would of course admit a general coincidence between the commands of the moral law and the requirements of social welfare;

and they include benevolence, in the sense of the aim to serve our fellow men, among the cardinal virtues. But they would regard this coincidence (outside of the field of "benevolence") as a mere matter of chance (or possibly an arrangement specially ordained by Providence); and would insist that in very many cases it does not obtain. It is notorious, they would claim, that a man may recognize an obligation to tell the truth, to be faithful to his agreements, to act justly, and keep the lower parts of his nature under control, without any thought of the good he is thereby doing his neighbor; and sometimes, they would add, he is, in fact, doing no good but perhaps actual harm. If this contention is true, rightness and conduciveness to welfare must be in essence two entirely different things.

Our examination of the value of Whewell's code as a contribution to the science of ethics may be brief, since our entire account of the moral judgment beginning with Chapter II has been in effect a running criticism upon it.

In appraising the claims of any moral principle to be an intuition of reason we must have some criteria for distinguishing between real axioms and maxims of conduct which appear to us self-evident merely because we can not remember a time when they did not appeal to us as true. Such criteria have been offered by Professor Sidgwick in the *Methods of Ethics*, Book III, Chapter XI, section 2. The most important of them are the following:

1. "The terms of the proposition must be clear and precise."
2. "The propositions accepted as self-evident must be mutually consistent."
3. "They must command universal assent on the part of those who understand their meaning."

To these must be added a criterion insisted upon repeatedly in Chapter XIII of the same book:

4. "The propositions must really direct us how to act," that is, they must not be tautological. Perhaps this may be included under 1, because we never suppose ourselves to be saying something when in reality we are saying nothing except as the terms we use are far removed from clearness and precision.

If we examine Whewell's moral axioms in the light of the

above criteria their unfitness to serve as the foundation of a code of conduct becomes obvious at once. Let us take up each in turn. First: "Man is to be loved [*i.e.*, served] as man." This statement offends against the first of the above requirements, for it gives me not the slightest information as to how much service I am to give and how much repression I am to exercise upon my selfish desires for the benefit of others. For example, are my positive obligations in the way of service completely met if I conform my conduct to Cicero's dictum that "Whatever one can give without suffering loss should be given, even to an entire stranger?" Or are the proper limits of self-sacrifice set by the words: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor *as* thyself?" Or must I go still farther and accept the maxim of the philosopher Comte: "Live solely for others?" Whewell's formula throws no light whatever on these all-important questions.

The second rule declares: "Each man is to have his own." The word *own* may mean either one of two things: First, that which I actually possess. In this interpretation the formula declares that every man should be allowed to keep that which he happens to possess, no matter how he got it. Obviously such a conception of justice is preposterous. The second meaning of *own* is that which I ought to have. With this interpretation the formula reads, Every one ought to have what he ought to have—which is true, but not enlightening.

The principle of veracity declares, "We must speak the truth." What, then, are we to do in case of a serious conflict between the demands of benevolence and veracity? What, for example, are we to say of a lie told to save a man from death or from an imprisonment for life which he does not deserve, like the lie of Sister Simplice in *Les Miserables?* Is one to tell the truth even in such circumstances? If you say Yes, you have lost the universal assent of the race. If you say No, then you must have what Whewell does not provide, namely some intuitive rule which will tell when benevolence is to prevail and when veracity. What Whewell actually does is to admit very grudgingly that there may be exceptions in cases of necessity, and to refuse to supply the rule which would determine the boundaries within which they are permissible.

The other rules we can dismiss even more briefly. The fourth, termed the law of purity, is a vague assertion of the relation of the higher to the lower which is involved in the very notion of morality. It is stated so loosely that it is capable of affording no definite directions of any sort. Finally, the principle of order does not mean and can not mean that under no circumstances whatever is armed rebellion against legally constituted political authority permissible. Again it is the old dilemma. Deny absolutely the justification of all rebellion or other forms of disobedience to law and you have the greater part of the public opinion of the world against you. Affirm it for extreme cases and you need a new rule, as in the case of veracity, which will assign this right (or duty) its limits.

### Kant's Account of the Moral Standard

A more plausible formulation of the moral code in Intuitionistic terms was presented by the German philosopher Kant (1724-1804). At all events, no other has ever met with so wide an acceptance among modern Europeans. It reads (in one of its several forms) "Act so that the maxim of thy will can always serve, at the same time, as a principle of universal legislation." [4] This is the famous categorical imperative. It is so called because it binds not hypothetically, that is to say, as a means to an end in which a person happens to be interested (for example, if you want to become a successful athlete go into training), but unconditionally or categorically. This supreme principle is supposed to represent a law of action revealed to us by reason. Reason is here thought of, not as revealing a special set of ethical axioms, as with Whewell, but as the source of the principle of contradiction. Reason forbids us to contradict ourselves, alike in our thoughts and our actions. What reason forbids or commands to one it necessarily forbids or commands to everyone else. Hence, that mode of action must be wrong which, if practiced by everyone, would be self-destructive; or, in other words, which it is literally impossible to conceive as a universal principle of action. As an illustration, Kant offers the borrowing of money with no intention of returning it. Such a course of ac-

[4] *Critique of Practical Reason,* Part I, Book I, Ch. i, sec. 7.

tion could not become a universal practice because, under such circumstances, the would-be borrower would not be able to find anyone who would lend to him. The very idea of universal borrowing without returning is thus self-contradictory.

When we attempt to apply this criterion to actual concrete cases, we find ourselves face to face with a very serious ambiguity. Does our formula mean quite literally "everyone," or rather "Everyone that wishes to?" Apparently the former. Only in this way, at least, is it possible to justify some of the most insistent convictions of the ordinary man's conscience. Take, for example, the case of lying. If, every time everyone used his vocal organs, he lied, no one would pay any attention to what anyone else said. Speech, and with it untruthful speech, would disappear. But, as a matter of fact, in most of our ordinary conversation we have no motives whatever for lying. Accordingly, if men lied only when they wanted to deceive, this would not happen often enough to render all communication impossible; it would merely result in very serious harm. If the Kantian formula, therefore, is to supply us with the ground for condemning unveracity, it must take the term *everyone* seriously and interpret its imperative to mean: That action is wrong which would be self-destructive if performed by everyone every time he had an opportunity and whether he had any desire to perform it or not.

If this conclusion is valid, however, some surprising consequences follow. It is not, to be sure, necessarily false for this reason. But we had perhaps better look before we leap. Kant, as some of his critics have not failed to note, was a bachelor. If every man lived as he lived, that is to say, without children, all human life, and with it the possibility of anyone living as a bachelor, would soon be brought to an end. The apologists for Kantianism, like Abbott in his Introduction to his translation of the Kantian ethics,[5] contend that the maxim on which Kant acted: Those may remain unmarried who so desire, is entirely in accordance with his formula, because enough people will always want to marry and have children to keep the race going. But we have just seen that this interpretation of the categorical

[5] *Kant's Theory of Ethics*, p. liv.

imperative does not exclude unveracity—a conclusion presumably unacceptable to the members of this school.

These illustrations, I believe, are typical, so that the same dilemma will meet us wherever we turn. Kant and his disciples have succeeded in concealing the real situation from themselves by using now one of the possible meanings of their formula and now another, according as the varying exigencies of controversy have happened to dictate. They have thus failed to see that either interpretation, applied consistently, would wreck the system.

But now let us carry the argument a step further. Suppose it could be shown, on any system of hermeneutics you choose, that a given kind of action would become impossible by becoming universal. What of it? This fact would not make anyone feel an obligation to refrain from it unless he wished, on one ground or another, its continued existence. Suppose, for example, that vaccine fluid could be obtained only from human beings who were suffering from smallpox. Suppose, furthermore, that vaccination were an unfailing protection against the onset of this disease. Suppose, finally, that smallpox propagated itself only through contagion, having its source in other cases of the same disease. Under such circumstances universal vaccination would, in time, destroy the possibility of all vaccination. So far from condemning the practice on this ground, we should regard it as the most impressive consideration that could be urged in its favor.

We have been using a certain formulation of the Kantian standard and interpreting it in a way expressly sanctioned by Kant himself.[6] But he has another formula for the categorical imperative besides the one which we have just been studying, intended to include and go beyond it. Fairness demands that we should not leave the subject until we have examined it also. It reads, "Act only on that maxim whereby thou canst at the same time will that it should become a universal law." [7] Confine the laws of morality to those which, if universalized, destroy

[6] "Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals; Second Section" (Abbott, *Kant's Theory of Ethics*, p. 41).

[7] "Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals; Second Section" (Abbott, *op. cit.*, p. 38).

each other and, as Kant himself recognized, you can find no place for the multiform duties of positive service. For example, there is nothing self-contradictory about the maxim, "Every one must depend upon his own efforts for his own subsistence." It is merely, if carried through to the end, inhuman. This difficulty the formula just quoted is deliberately designed to meet. Does it really do so?

My answer is that this second formulation of the categorical imperative, while in a sense quite beyond criticism as a statement of the moral ideal, can not save the system, and this for two reasons. In the first place, the source of the formula is not reason in the sense in which Kant claims it to be. That is to say, it is not the product of the bare principle of contradiction. If I should ever be in need of money, Kant argues, I should want others to help me. Hence I can not will universal observance of the principle: Every man for himself. This contention, it seems to me, is open to a fatal objection. A thoroughly selfish man would always want to get as much as possible out of everyone else, alike whether he was a pauper or a millionaire. But, rich or poor, if sufficiently confident in his intellectual powers to believe in his own eventual success in amassing wealth, he would prefer to accept the maxim: "Let everyone look out solely for himself," rather than its alternative, "Bear ye one another's burdens." To say that an egoist would not be willing to adopt the first maxim for fear he might some day need someone else's help is to say that no one would want to ride in an automobile because if crippled in an accident he would wish be had stayed at home. The strong man who adopts the principle: Let those who have share with those who have not, is one whose desires for good extend to his neighbors as well as himself. The source of the desire for a society permeated by the spirit of mutual aid is thus not reason in the Kantian sense, but benevolence. Thus when Rationalism finally obtains a formula which can actually be used, it turns out to have its source not in the principle of contradiction but in the desire for the good of our fellow-men.

It will be noticed, in the second place, that this formula of Kant's is identical with that which was presented in Chapter

VII, page 110 of this book. But it there appears, not as a formula for the standard of right, but as the definition of what we mean by right. It was an account of the predicate of the moral judgment, not the subject. Right means that mode of conduct which we wish everyone to perform. But the question remains, What are the modes, or what is the mode of action which we wish everyone to perform? It is the answer to the latter which provides the formula for the standard. What Kant has done is, ignoring entirely the problem of meaning as such, to present a definition of right as a criterion of right. In his own language, he has tried to make a synthetic out of an analytic judgment.

## An Examination of the Intuitionistic Account of the Meaning of Right

The fundamental assertions of Intuitionism about the moral judgment may be set forth as follows. In the judgment: The volition A is right, (1) right is an unanalyzable concept (2) having its source in reason; and (3) the connection between A and right, or the truth of the statement that A is right, is intuitively perceived by reason also, provided the judgment constitutes a fundamental moral principle. Our study of Whewell and Kant, in this Chapter, and of Cumberland and Sidgwick in the following one justifies the assertion, I believe, that the third of the above propositions is untenable. We shall now examine the first and second together. I shall try to show that no sufficient evidence has anywhere been offered to overthrow the position that right is analyzable and can be defined in terms of desire.

The grounds upon which this school bases its doctrine of the indefinability of right is the alleged failure of all attempts hitherto made to analyze and define it.[8] The attempts they have in mind are two in number. The first is that of Subjectivism, which contents itself with a definition of right as that which arouses a feeling of approbation. The second is represented by the definition of Egoistic Utilitarianism, according to which

[8] Price, *A Review of the Principal Questions in Morals,* Book I, Chapter III, *sub init.* Sidgwick, *Methods of Ethics,* Book I, Chapter III. It should be noted that Kant has no formulated theory of the meaning of right. Apparently he never even saw the problem.

right means commanded, whether by God or the state or public opinion. Intuitionism declares that the first is false because it is incompatible with the objectivity of moral distinctions, which is assumed at the outset of the inquiry. The second is easily shown to be out of all relation with the facts of the moral experience, since the fear of a penalty and the consciousness of right are very different things. Thereupon it is assumed that these represent the only definitions of right which any human being can possibly offer. Hence it is concluded that the term is indefinable. It is hardly necessary to say that if some other definition can be found, whether it be our own definition as worked out in Chapter VII, or some other, this entire argument falls to the ground.

The initial mistake of Intuitionism seems to me to consist in assuming objectivity, independently of all attempts at proof. It is indeed true that the layman regards moral judgments as having objective validity. This is proved, *inter alia,* by his spontaneous recognition that of two contradictory judgments one must be false. This attitude is not at all peculiar to our own civilization. It can be found in ancient Greece, Rome, Palestine, and China, as easily as in the Europe or America of today. It appears to dominate the workings of the consciousness of primitive man equally with that of the highest representatives of the race. But these indubitable facts raise two questions: (1) Precisely what is the nature of the objectivity which is implied in the layman's moral judgments? (2) Can it be maintained that objectivity in this sense is a fact? Untrained thought is mistaken about a thousand matters. Our first notions on any subject are almost invariably false. If objectivity is something more than a popular delusion, its vindication should appear during the course of the investigation; it should not be adopted as a postulate at the start. When the average man says the grass is green he is attaching the quality of greenness to the grass in the sense in which no physicist, physiologist, or psychologist, and no metaphysician who has learned from these men of science would think of justifying. How dare anyone assert *in advance* that in the moral field the layman may not be the victim of a similar error? In reality the proposition that

moral distinctions are objective may mean several different things. In which of these meanings it is a verifiable fact, or whether it is so in any possible meaning of the term, are matters that can be determined only after a most searching examination of the layman's judgments.

The foregoing strictures upon Intuitionism give, I fear, a decidedly false impression of the significance of this valiant school of thinkers for the progress of ethical theory. It has served as a perpetual witness to the reality of certain aspects of the moral life to which many of its opponents have been incurably blind. It has declared in no uncertain tones that morality can never be explained in terms of the egoistic side of human nature. It has proved that the moral law can not have its source in arbitrary commands, whether of God, or the state, or of public opinion. It has insisted that character is valuable not merely as a means for the production of useful actions but also as an end in itself. It has shown, as against Subjectivism, that the layman in calling actions wrong always means something more than an affirmation of the feeling of mere personal dislike for it. And it has, at the least count, invited the moralists to justify this conclusion and save the words right and wrong from being mulcted of a great part of their meaning. In fact, for two and a half centuries it has performed a service of the greatest importance in keeping the entire problem of objectivity, with all its ramifications, in the foreground of ethical discussion. Finally, it has asserted, even though with much obscurity of expression and indeed of thought, that morality with all the sacrifices it may entail is still our reasonable service. There can be no doubt that contemporary ethical theory would be far behind where it is today if it had not been for the labors of this long line of able and vigorous students.

## II

### Aristotelian Æstheticism

Of all non-utilitarian theories of the moral standard, that of Aristotle seems to me to be the most plausible. It has been formally adopted, as far as I am aware, by no modern moralist

of note; but during the past fifty years it has exercised a profound influence upon that distinguished group of men who form what, for want of a better name, may be called the school of T. H. Green.

This account of the standard is Aristotle's most important contribution to the theory of the moral judgment. He does not really face the other questions concerning right and wrong. We can infer with a certain measure of plausibility what his attitude would have been towards some issues upon which he was silent, or rather what in consistency it ought to have been. By implication he treats desire as the source of moral distinctions. But beyond this point the student of ethical history would be rash to go.

The essential feature of Aristotle's description of the moral judgment is the leading rôle assigned to judgments of the type described in Chapter X. For this reason, as has already been suggested, his system may without serious impropriety be termed Æstheticism, although other than æsthetic factors are demonstrably present. These judgments are based upon the direct attractions and repulsions aroused by certain actions, or by the kind of person who wills them. Aristotle draws up a list of ten virtues with the corresponding vices. We shall attempt to acquaint ourselves with the spirit of his system by examining the account of two of them. We shall begin, as he does, with courage.

Courage has to do with control of fear. But there are some things, such as disgrace, that we ought to fear.

"What then is the object of fear with which courage is concerned? Surely that which is the object of the greatest fear—for the courageous man is the man to face it—death, which puts an end to life. But not death, as such, however coming—thus, not death by shipwreck or disease—but death coming gloriously in battle. He is courageous, in the strict sense, who is without dread of a glorious death, and of the risks which bring it to close quarters with him in sudden onslaught—and such above all are the risks of war; not that the courageous man is not also without dread of death by shipwreck or disease; but the prospect of such a death does not call forth his peculiar excellence, for he revolts against it as miserable and inglorious . . . nor can he take up arms and defend himself against it. It is only where a man can take up arms and defend himself, or where death is glorious, that he can

show courage. . . . [The brave man] will govern aright his fear and his confidence, facing the danger of battle, as he ought, and as reason dictates, for the sake of glorious achievement; for glorious achievement is the end of virtue. . . . The habit of courage is a glory to human nature: it exists for the sake of being a glory to human nature—to be this that it is is its end. To show forth then the peculiar glory of courage is the end for the sake of which the courageous man faces danger and does deeds of courage."

The word here translated "glorious achievement" is in the original *kalon,* which is the Greek term for beautiful. "To the courageous man, courage is essentially a beautiful thing," writes Aristotle, "Therefore the end he has in view in exercising courage is the attainment of the beautiful." [9]

Virtue, according to Aristotle, is a mean between two extremes.[10] The extremes in this case are foolhardiness and cowardice. Where, then, is the line to be drawn between the mean and either extreme? Aristotle makes no attempt to tell us. The reason is that he believes no general rule can be laid down. Courage does not derive any of its moral value from its relation to the winning of victories for a just cause. This value consists rather in its direct attractiveness. Hence the criterion of usefulness fails us and all we can say is that the mean between foolhardiness and cowardice is a point whose location is discovered in each individual case by the artist in the conduct of life through an act of "immediate perception." An analogy is supplied by the ear of the trained violinist, which tells him directly whether his instrument is in tune or not. If you carry the inquiry a step further and ask, How shall I know whether I am an artist whose taste in these matters can be trusted, and if it should turn out that I am not a connoisseur, by what mark shall I recognize the man who is, and if I find him will his judgments prove infallible?—you are asking questions which Aristotle did not even raise, to say nothing of answering.

With judgments of the type just presented we are already

[9] The first quotation in the paragraph is from the summary of the text of the *Nichomachean Ethics* given by J. A. Stewart in his "Notes on the Nichomachean Ethics," Vol. I, pp. 282, 286. The second quotation is directly from Aristotle, and follows Peters' translation (page 83), except that I have substituted the word "beautiful" for "fair or noble."

[10] *The Nichomachean Ethics* (Peters' translation), p. 46.

quite familiar. Let us then turn to some of another kind. Liberality is the virtue displayed in one's attitude towards money. In so far as it has to do with the spending of money, it is a mean between prodigality—in the sense of wasting one's substance by reckless giving—and illiberality, or "stinginess." All virtuous actions are performed for the sake of the admirable or beautiful. Therefore the liberal man will give, not primarily for the sake of his neighbor, but in order to create within himself an admirable or beautiful character. Where to begin with his benefactions and where to stop will be revealed to him by the same direct insight which discovers the distinction between true and false courage.

There is a striking difference between Intuitionism and Aristotelianism. There exists in the world of human life nothing corresponding to the former's account of the moral judgment. There are, of course, certain phenomena which resemble its descriptions superficially.[11] In Aristotle's system, on the other hand, we find a very different relationship to the facts. The judgments he describes are actual judgments. The questions which they raise are accordingly these: Is the description of the facts complete in essentials? Are these judgments entitled to the name of moral judgments? If so, can they, as he invariably assumes, possess validity?

I shall begin with a discussion of the judgments upon courage. While this will, in part, cover ground already traversed, the importance of the subject is such that I think it deserves a somewhat more detailed treatment than it received in Chapter X.

In the first place, then, this account of the attitude toward courage is defective in that it ignores the fact that many judgments with regard to facing danger are determined solely by utilitarian considerations. There are, in fact, two points of view in this matter. It is said that the officers of one of the armies in the World War, in the first few weeks of service, refused to avail themselves of the protection of the trenches because it appeared to them cowardly to avoid danger. This practice continued, indeed, until so many of them were picked off by the sharpshooters of the enemy that the highest military authorities

[11] See above, Chapter II, pp. 26 to 29, Chapter VII, p. 110.

had to put a stop to it. Apparently Aristotle would have greeted such exhibitions of courage with enthusiasm.[12] But now there is another point of view and this has been held by soldiers just as brave as any, who, in the pursuit of an ideal of personal excellence, ever threw away lives sorely needed by their country. Says Macaulay of William III of England: "Nothing was more hateful and repulsive to this iron character than cowardice; and next to this, useless exposure to danger." [13] Our first criticism of Aristotle, then, is that he recognizes the existence of no standard except the æsthetic for determining the demands of courage, whereas many men—and some of them very brave men —accept an entirely different one.

In the second place, the æsthetic criterion is not the only standard applied even by those who are most addicted to its use. On the contrary, the most thorough-going votary of the beautiful in conduct will be found gradually losing his devotion to it as the utility aimed at in the courageous act grows less and less in value. This process of falling away from the faith was described in Chapter X. I should like to add one more illustration.

The Chinese philosopher, Me Ti, tells the following story:

"King Kou Tchien, of Yueh, took great pride in the courage of his soldiers. He set one of his ships on fire and told his soldiers it contained all his treasures. The king himself struck the drum to summon them to go forward. When the soldiers heard him beating the drum they broke from the ranks, rushed forward in wild confusion, and threw themselves into the flames. A hundred were killed before the king struck the gong and called them back.'" [14]

I can not imagine anyone except perhaps a Nietzschean who would not regard this piece of stage play as an act of

[12] See the *Nichomachean Ethics*, Book III, ch. viii (Peters' translation), p. 87. Compare Stewart, *Notes on the Nichomachean Ethics*, Vol. I, p. 295, and Grote, *History of Greece*, ch. 87.

[13] I have quoted and translated from Horwicz, *Psychologische Analysen*, Vol. II, Second Half, p. 246. I have not been able to find the original passage, but whether it was applied to the head of the House of Orange by Macaulay or by someone else, everyone who remembers the World War is perfectly familiar with this type of soldier. *Cf.* Colonel Roosevelt's letter, quoted above, Chapter II, p. 24.

[14] *Philosophische Werke*, translated by Alfred Forke, p. 247.

superlative wickedness. But he who takes this attitude has, in principle, accepted King William's criterion of courage. And this criterion condemns the officers in the World War to whom I have referred, the Moscow guards, and the French workmen who threw their lives away, just as unequivocally, even if not so severely, as the Chinese king.

In the attempt to defend Aristotle's delineation of our moral ideals, Professor Muirhead writes: The courageous character is, for Aristotle, not "an isolated phenomenon, but only the inner side of the city life to which it ministers and in which it finds its end." [15] Although this assertion contradicts flatly certain perfectly unambiguous statements of Aristotle himself, I have no doubt some such conception was in the background of his mind when he wrote this part of the Nichomachean Ethics. If so, it only verifies the claim just made. Talk as much as you will about a quality like courage being an end in itself, recognized as such by a direct judgment of admiration; the fact remains that admiration becomes moral approbation only in so far as there is in the foreground or background of the mind some conception, however vague, of a good to be accomplished in the performance, outside of the existence of the courageous volition itself. What Utilitarianism demands is that this conception be brought into the foreground of consciousness and be used as a measure of the dangers to which a man ought to expose himself, and of those which it is not merely his right but also his duty to avoid.

"Fame," said Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, "'usually comes to those who are thinking of something else." The same thing is still more unequivocally true of beauty of character. "The passionate devotion of a mother to a sick or dying child," writes William James, "is perhaps the most simply beautiful moral spectacle that human life affords." But what kind of beauty would that be which cared nothing for the child but sought only to be beautiful? When you consciously pursue beauty of character, I care not in what form, it ordinarily eludes you. Forget it, think only of the needs which you can supply, the suffering that you can avert or heal, and it may become yours. Here, as

[15] *Chapters from Aristotle's Ethics*, p. 108.

elsewhere, he that will save his life shall lose it. For beauty of character can come, for the most part, only to those who are thinking of something else.

The preceding discussion will enable us to deal more briefly with the non-utilitarian approbation of liberality. First, what is the source of such judgments? I can find no other explanation of them than that given above in Chapter X, page 167, and following. An unselfish man finds in another a congenial spirit and is therefore attracted towards him and his ways. There is nothing peculiar to morals in this fact: I may have the same feeling for a man who likes his verses served with rhymes. In consequence of the influence exerted by discovered congeniality the heart of an unselfish man goes out directly to the man who is liberal with his money, without apparent consciousness of any other considerations. This seems to me to be the source of the judgment. The "beauty" for the sake of which the liberal man is declared by Aristotle to act, can, as far as I can see, be nothing other than the desire to have the good man's good will. For no one can aim at congeniality with self. But he who is moved to liberality only by this motive has never possessed the liberal spirit himself, and therefore is not, in reality, congenial with the unselfish. It is the same old story. The intrinsic charm of the liberal spirit is a fact. But it can never be gained by pursuing it.

Nor can the ideal of congeniality serve as a valid criterion by which to judge the actions of others. Maggie Tulliver, in *The Mill on the Floss*, gave up her lover and with him the opportunity of leading a broad, interesting, and happy life. This she did for the sake of saving her father a pang which he had no right to ask to be spared under the circumstances. Yet there are persons who regard this sacrifice as worthy of approbation. Apparently George Eliot was one of the number. Any observer who is looking only for congeniality and thinking of nothing else will take precisely this attitude. But the reflectively and comprehensively benevolent man will include Maggie's fate and the fate of her lover also within the purview of his altruism, and will condemn her sacrifice, however well meant, for precisely the same reason that he would never allow

himself to play the rôle of the father. In other words this form of beauty of character is plainly parasitic upon the eudemonic ideal, since only he who in general approves of helpful actions and disapproves of harm-bringing actions can feel the immediate attractiveness of the altruistic spirit. But he who is possessed by this ideal through and through will never permit himself to applaud so disproportionate a sacrifice as that of George Eliot's heroine.*

We reach, at length, by a somewhat circuitous route, the conclusion affirmed in Chapter X. There are many ways in which conduct can arouse in the spectator satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Only certain of these can properly be called moral, if our definition of *moral* is to have the self-consistency which every definition claims to possess. But however we define our terms, the eudemonic ideal is the only one that can be carried through consistently; and where other values, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, conflict with its demands they have no standing in the court of morality.

I have dealt at considerable length with Aristotle's description of our moral standards because of its practical importance. Aristotle gives, within certain limits, one of the most faithful accounts of the superficial aspects of the layman's moral judgments to be found in the literature of ethics. As these judgments stand they form a confused tangle of heterogeneous contradictories: The eudemonic in its various forms, as set forth above in Chapters II and III; the dysdemonic; the æsthetic; the antipathetic; the "judgment of congeniality"; and a number of more or less sporadic forms such as those in which we condemn vulgar display and the grudged gift. Aristotle recognizes the antipathetic judgment in his account of "temperance"; the dysdemonic, in his discussion of "gentleness." The latter is the proper mean between wrathfulness and wrathlessness,[16] the reactions of the artist in conduct supplying the criterion of what is proper. The eudemonic is also present. It appears in the account of distributive justice in Book V, which though probably not writ-

* See Notes, XVI, "Judgments of Congeniality and the Law of Retaliation," page 515.

[16] Peters' translation, p. 122.

ten by Aristotle, comes from his school, and presumably represents with a fair degree of faithfulness the master's ideas. There is reason to suppose that if he had himself written the account of justice the eudemonic judgment would have been still more in evidence than it actually is. However that may be, in Books III and IV this standard has an interesting way of appearing here and there in unexpected places. The character of a man given to display and the man who gives grudgingly, we are told, are vicious, "but they do not bring reproach because they are neither injurious to others nor very offensive in themselves." [17] A man who has great merits and is not properly conscious of the fact is called little-minded; he that exceeds the proper mean in this respect is vain or conceited. "Now, these two [extremes] do not seem to be bad, for they do no harm although they are in error." [18]

The judgments of the average layman contain a far larger proportion of eudemonic judgments than can be found in Aristotle's list. Otherwise his picture of the products of the lay conscience, as they appear at first glance and without analysis, seems to me essentially correct. If, after the lapse of twenty-two hundred years, our analyses had not penetrated a little farther below the surface it were great shame to us.

[17] Peters, p. 112.
[18] Peters, p. 120.

## Chapter XVII

# TYPES OF UTILITARIANISM

Utilitarian theories can be divided into Egoistic and Universalistic. The term Universalistic Utilitarianism is so cumbersome that I shall ordinarily replace it with Universalism.

## I

### Egoistic Utilitarianism

The beginnings of Egoistic Utilitarianism in the European world may be traced back as far as Aristippus of Cyrene, a pupil of Socrates. He founded in the early part of the fourth century B. C., a school of philosophy called Cyrenaic. It seems to have enjoyed a certain measure of prosperity for a time; but finally, as Lincoln said of his store in New Salem, it "winked out." Epicurus, who came to Athens in 306 B. C., and taught there with great success for a generation, adopted the fundamental ethical views of Cyrenaicism, modifying and supplementing them, however, in some very important respects. He founded a school of philosophy in Athens, that is to say, a permanent teaching institution, whose seat was in his own garden. This continued in uninterrupted existence for nearly nine centuries, until it, together with its rivals, was closed by the Emperor Justinian in 576 A. D. In the middle ages Epicureanism suffered an eclipse, but reappeared with the "Revival of Learning" and the restoration of Greek influence. In modern times the systematic study of ethics was begun by an adherent of this way of thinking, Thomas Hobbes, who flourished about 1650. In the next generation it was represented by the most famous of British philosophers, John Locke; and from his day till the latter part of the nineteenth century it ranked as one of the world's influential systems of ethics.

### The Standard of Right

This theory of right and wrong has its source in a certain conception of the motives which determine conduct. The sole end in view, it claims, is the attainment of pleasure or the avoidance of pain for self. By *pain* is meant what many psychologists now call "displeasure" or "unpleasantness"—that is to say, the opposite of pleasure. If a man accepts pain it is because he expects thereby either to avoid a still greater pain, or to gain a pleasure which will more than compensate for it. If he refuses an obtainable pleasure it is, similarly, for the sake of gaining some greater pleasure or avoiding some counterbalancing pain. When a man attempts to increase the pleasure of someone else or refrains from injuring him when the opportunity is offered him to do so with profit to himself, this again is because he expects to make, in the long run, more than he loses by the transaction.

Right is a thing which some human beings, at least, are capable of doing. But no one can do anything without a motive. Hence there must be some motive in the mind of man to which the rightness of conduct appeals. In view of what has just been said, this can only be the desire for personal pleasure with its correlative aversion from pain. Right conduct is accordingly declared to be that conduct which makes for the greatest attainable surplus of pleasure over pain for me. According to this view it would seem that a man may murder, steal, lie, and break his promises whenever he thinks such action will best promote his own interests. This is certainly the logical corollary of the theory, but it is too violent a paradox to be swallowed by anyone. This difficulty is met by asserting with all desirable definiteness that the interests of self, properly understood, and the interests of society are absolutely identical, so that in best serving one the individual is at the same time best serving the other. Self-control, courage, and honesty are the best policy in the long run, everywhere and always. And thus right action may be described as that which makes for the maximum obtainable pleasure of society as a whole.

### The Meaning of Right and the Source of Moral Distinctions

Whatever lip service may be done to the good of society, however, it is evident that for the *Egoistic Utilitarian* the pleasure of self remains, in the last resort the ultimate standard of right and wrong. If so, on what basis do we distinguish, as we constantly do, a right action from a merely prudent or "wise" one? How do we distinguish, for example, between refusing a profitable opportunity to lie because lying is wrong, and refusing an opportunity to invest one's savings in a gold mine because the project looks risky. The answer is given by John Locke in the following words:

> "Good and evil are nothing but pleasure or pain, or that which occasions or procures pleasure or pain to us. Moral good and evil [*i.e.*, right and wrong], then, is only the conformity or disagreement of our voluntary actions to some law, whereby good and evil is drawn on us from the will and power of the law-maker." [1]

Right, accordingly, is defined as that which is demanded by law. This law, says Locke, may be the law of God, the law of the state, or the law laid down by public opinion and enforced by those penalties which it knows perfectly well how to inflict, such as the signs of disapprobation to which we are all so sensitive. Those actions, therefore, are right, as distinguished from prudent, which are demanded under penalty by God or man in the interests of social welfare; actions which it will accordingly pay you to perform if you wish to avoid the pains of punishment.

This conclusion makes possible another statement. The commands and prohibitions which we individually and collectively impose upon human conduct have their source in desire—the desire, namely, to bring into existence pleasure-giving modes of conduct and to discourage the opposite. God, it is said, desires the happiness of his creatures (though, if this theory of motives be true, it is difficult to see why); hence he has "prescribed [the] rules [of morality and] has ordained [a] Hell for the punishment of those that transgress them" (Locke). Men desire to be secure

[1] *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, 1690, Book II, Ch. XXVIII, sec. 5.

against aggression on the part of their fellow-men; hence the organized community, or the state, imposes penalties for murder, theft, and similar deeds. Finally man has devised another set of rewards and penalties, namely praise and blame. Their origin is explained by Locke in the following words: "Nothing can be more natural than to encourage with esteem and reputation that wherein everyone finds his advantage, and to blame and discountenance the contrary."[2] This brief suggestion, as developed by later writers, can be formulated as follows. Men love the praise of others and dislike their blame. If then a given person desires (as he certainly will) that his fellow-men should keep their promises to him, should tell him the truth, and respect his property, he can often secure this treatment by praising these kinds of action. This will supply other persons with an inducement to perform them; and thus through their desire for the pleasure of praise and dislike of blame he may be able to gain the personal advantages that he desires. For this school of ethics, then, the ultimate source of the distinction between right and wrong is found in desire.

### The Services of Egoistic Utilitarianism to Ethics

Such is the account of the moral judgment given by Egoistic Utilitarianism. There remains only the duty of appraising its services to this department of ethics. These services have been of great value. Epicureanism has always asserted that right and wrong are determined by the relation of conduct to welfare, however inadequate its conception of the nature of this relation may have been. It has placed, correctly as I believe, the source of the judgment of right in desire. It has contributed its part to showing that there is no such conflict between the demands of self-interest and the good of society as is commonly supposed to exist. These facts assure it a permanent place in the history of ethics. But its claims to our acceptance in its entirety are destroyed by a large number of considerations, a sufficient one being the inadequacy of its account of human motives and the impossibility of constructing upon so narrow a foundation a sound theory of moral praise and blame.

[2] *Op. cit.*, Book II, Ch. XXVIII, sec. ii.

## II

### Universalistic Utilitarianism: Confucius

*Universalistic Utilitarianism* (*or "Universalism"*) is the gift of Asia. Its first unambiguous formulation appears in the teachings of Confucius (552-471 B.C.). Confucius, like Socrates, the founder of Greek ethics (born 469 B.C.) was haunted by the problem of the unity of virtue. Have all right actions the same fundamental nature? That is to say, are all our approbations and disapprobations due to the application to conduct of a single standard? Confucius like Socrates answered this question in the affirmative. "My doctrine," he said, "is that of an all-pervading unity." But he went further. He felt himself able to do that of which Socrates distinctly declared himself incapable: he formulated the standard. Tsze-Kung, one of his disciples, asked him,

> "'Is there one word which may serve as a rule of practice for one's life?' The Master said: 'Is not reciprocity such a word? What you do not want done to yourself, do not do unto others.'" [3]

This rule bids the agent before acting put himself in the place of him whom his proposed action will affect. The purpose of this requirement can only be to produce in the agent a realizing sense of the effects of his actions. That action is right, accordingly, which is performed with a full realization of its effects upon the interests of others. It has been claimed that this formula, if regarded as a rigidly scientific presentation of an ultimate ethical truth, is one-sided in that a really valid judgment must take into account the interests of the agent also. To this the obvious reply is that we may assume that in thinking of others the agent will not forget himself. However, I am here concerned not with defending Confucius, but with interpreting him. By declaring unequivocally that the morality of our actions is determined by their relation to the interests

[3] *Analects*, Book XV, Ch. XXIII. The translation is that of James Legge, *Chinese Classics*, 2d Edition, Vol. I, p. 301. The word which Legge translates *reciprocity* seems to be nearer to our English word *kindness*, or *sympathy*. Literally it means "as heart." See the article Confucius in the Encyclopedia Britannica, 11th Edition.

of those affected he unquestionably affirms the fundamental tenet of Utilitarianism.

This is Universalistic, not Egoistic Utilitarianism. Confucius, to be sure, has left no record of any struggle with subtleties such as those which confused Lincoln when he pulled the pigs out of the mud.[4] But the spirit of his thinking is completely out of harmony with Lincoln's interpretation of unselfish conduct. One of the subjects, we are informed, of which he seldom spoke, was profitableness, which seems quite clearly to mean profitableness of virtue to the agent.[5] Again and again he makes statements that sound as if he regarded character as having intrinsic value for its possessor. But however such statements are to be interpreted, self-realization or self-perfection was not for him, as it was for most of the Greek philosophers, the last word on the subject.

"Tsze-lu asked what constituted the superior man. The Master said, 'The cultivation of himself in reverential carefulness.' 'And is this all?' said Tsze-lu. 'He cultivates himself so as to give rest to others,' was the reply. 'And is this all?' asked Tsze-lu. The Master said, 'He cultivates himself so as to give rest to all the people.' "[6]

It is often claimed that the Confucian formula demands nothing more than negative morality. This is indeed the most natural interpretation of the words as they stand. However it can be made to include positive morality also: Do not let your neighbor starve if you do not want him to let you starve. If this may appear a somewhat strained reading, looking at the rule in its isolation from the rest of the master's teachings, nevertheless it is as a matter of fact that which is required by the system taken as a whole. For this is at bottom as insistent upon service as it is upon the refraining from injury. This statement is true to overflowing in the case of the five fundamental relations: father and son; husband and wife; older and younger brother; friend and friend; ruler and subject. But positive morality is also demanded in the relations of human

[4] See above, Chapter V, page 75.

[5] *Analects*, Book IX, Ch. I. In Legge, *op. cit.*, p. 216. See the translator's note.

[6] *Analects*, Book XIV, Ch. XLV.

beings, as such, to each other. "The man of perfect virtue, wishing to establish himself, seeks also to establish others; wishing to be enlarged himself, he seeks also to enlarge others. To be able to judge of others by what is nigh to ourselves, this may be called the art of virtue." [7]

We of the Western world are so familiar with the golden rule as it appears in the New Testament that we may easily fail to appreciate the historical significance of this its first formulation. It seems as much of a commonplace to us as the once sensational theses that the earth is round and revolves about the sun. As a matter of fact, this reduction of all the apparent manifoldness of the requirements of morality to a single formula is one of the major achievements of ethical theory, indeed is one of the greatest as well as one of the most important generalizations to be found in the entire intellectual history of the race.

### Me Ti

A somewhat more definite and at the same time more radical formulation of Universalistic Utilitarianism is that of the Chinese philosopher Me Ti or Mo Ti.[8] This remarkable man has till recently been known to us only through a few fragments in Legge's translation of the *Chinese Classics*.[9] In 1922, however, there appeared a complete German translation of his teachings made by Professor Alfred Forke, so that we are now able to examine his conception of the moral ideal in its entirety. Me Ti lived about a century after Confucius. His great predecessor believed emphatically in the superior claims of the nearer good. The novel feature of Me Ti's doctrine, as compared with that of the older philosopher, is the clean-cut and unambiguous assertion of the principle of equality of consideration for equal interests whether they be those of self, the members of one's family, or of others, to the exclusion of the claims of the nearer

[7] *Analects*, Book XIV, Ch. XLV. *Cf.* Book VI, Ch. III. It should be said, however, that Confucius' formula does not quite cover all his judgments since he believes in the law of retaliation, at least in extreme cases. See *Analects*, Book XIV, Ch. XXVI; but contrast with this Book V, Ch. XXII, and Book VIII, Ch. X.

[8] The "e" or "o" is pronounced like the "oe" in Goethe, except that it is short.

[9] In Vol. II, pp. 100-122.

and the more excellent as such, as well as the demands of revenge.

"If, then, all the inhabitants of the empire could be induced to come together in mutual love, and to love others as themselves, would they still show an unfilial spirit? Would there still be unkind persons? . . . Would there still be thieves and robbers? When everyone regarded another's house as his own, who would rob it? And when everyone placed other persons on an equality with self, who would practice violence?" [10]

Me Ti recognizes to the full the implications of this position. Like Confucius he bursts the bonds of tribal morality and proclaims the right of every human being to our forbearance and our service. With far greater definiteness than the older teacher he asserts that positive morality is equally binding with negative.

"We will examine the two opposing views, and for this purpose permit the representative of each to speak. Who are these two representatives? Let one adhere to the principle of union, the other one to the principle of division. The representative of the principle of division will say: How can I regard the person of my friend as equal to my own, or the relatives of my friend as equal to my own relatives? When, therefore, on his way home he sees his friend hungering he feeds him not, when his friend is cold he clothes him not, when he is sick he cures him not, and when he dies he buries him not. Such are the words and such are the deeds of the philosopher of division. The philosopher of unity speaks and acts otherwise. He says: I have heard that in order to be an eminent scholar in the empire one must under all circumstances place the person of his friend on an equality with self, and must look upon his friend's relatives as if they were his own. Only then can he claim to be a distinguished scholar in the empire. Consequently, when on his way home he sees his friend hungering he feeds him, he clothes him when he is cold, nurses him when he is sick, and cares for his burial when he is dead. Such are the words and such are the deeds of the philosopher of unity." [11]

The difference between the views of Confucius and those of Me Ti may be formulated thus. For Confucius the criterion

[10] Forke, *Me Ti des Socialethikers und seiner Schueler philosophische Werke*, p. 242; Legge, *Chinese Classics*, Vol. II, p. 102.

[11] Forke, p. 255; Legge, 110. The translations in the text are from the German of Forke. The word *friend* in the paragraph quoted is to be understood in the same sense as *neighbor* in the Gospels, namely, as one who needs our help. This fact comes out clearly in a passage which follows, Forke, p. 257; Legge, p. 111. The astonishing resemblance of the passage cited to *St. Matthew* XXV: 34, ff, together with the equally striking differences, will not escape the attention of the reader.

of a right action is the aim to produce some good for someone. In the event of a conflict of interests, the good of the nearer and the good of the more excellent, generally speaking, have, as such, a claim superior to that of the greater good. The position of Me Ti, on the other hand is that always and everywhere that action is right which aims at the maximum attainable good for all concerned. Modern Universalistic Utilitarianism, arguing along lines suggested in Chapter XIV above, recognizes the priority of the claims of the family and of excellence in so far as it can be derived as a corollary from the supreme standard. This corollary Me Ti accepts in its relation to excellence but not in its application to the family. For him my duty to my own father and my duty to the father of my neighbor are identical in content and imperativeness.

### Jesus

Five hundred years pass and the scene changes to the shores of the Mediterranean. There arises a greater than Confucius or Me Ti. But as far as the foundations of the moral life are concerned Jesus conceives of them in the same way as these Chinese sages, and uses, to a large extent, essentially the same language. The Confucian formula for what the translator calls "reciprocity" becomes the golden rule in the positive form with which we are all familiar. With Me Ti all morality is explicitly reduced to love, love for God and love for man; and the same measure of love is set in the words: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor *as* thyself." Any man whom we can help, whatever his race, is our neighbor; and we may not injure him in a spirit of retaliation under any conceivable conditions.[12]

It will be claimed by some that Jesus should be classed with those who, like Aristotle, hold that the rules of morality are determined, in part at least, by the intrinsic value of character. As evidence for this assertion will be offered the demand for purity of heart, freedom from anger, and the like, over and above mere abstinence from overt harmful action. To this I reply in the first place that purity of heart and the love of

[12] *St. Matthew* XXII: 35-40; *cf.* St. Paul in *Romans* XIII: 8, 9, and *Galatians* V: 14.

one's neighbor which casts out anger may be valued for their effects upon conduct as well as for themselves (see above Chapter VI, page 99, f.). In the second place, the point in dispute between Universalistic Utilitarianism and such a theory as Aristotle's is not whether character has an intrinsic value, for as we have seen many Utilitarians believe it has; the real question is whether, in a valid judgment, the rightness of an act is always determined by the relation of the act, as a means, to the good of those affected, as an end. I should hold that Confucius' formula, which says, in principle, look solely to the effects upon the welfare of those affected, definitely places the Chinese sage inside the boundaries of Utilitarianism. But the Confucian rule and the golden rule are in this respect identical; therefore the inclusion of the former carries with it the inclusion of the latter.

### The Meaning of Right in Oriental Universalism

The Oriental moralists, like the Greek, had no formulated theory of the meaning of *right* or the source of moral distinctions. The reason may well have been the same in each case. Moral reformers like Confucius and Jesus would have an obvious practical interest in formulating the criterion of right conduct. They would also realize the importance of discovering and, as it were, isolating, the fundamental moral motive, in order that they might know what they could appeal to. Their interest in the theory of ethics did not extend beyond these lines, and accordingly, as with Aristotle, we are left to conjecture when we attempt to construct a rounded system out of the isolated fragments in our hands. Confucius probably (as his great disciple, Mencius, certainly) placed the fundamental moral motive in sympathy or perhaps altruism; Me Ti and Jesus in what they (or their translators) called "love." This seems to commit them to some form of what I have called "Voluntarism." But beyond this point it is idle to attempt to penetrate.

### Richard Cumberland

A variety of causes united to prevent the Universalism of Jesus from obtaining acceptance in its integrity and entirety

by the Christian moralists of the following centuries. We can, however, trace the development of a movement in this direction through a series of approximations until it was finally formulated with all but complete definiteness, and with a fairly adequate recognition of the underlying assumptions, by Richard Cumberland in *The Laws of Nature* published in 1672.[13]

The sum of the moral law is declared to be "the endeavor to the utmost of our power of promoting the common good of the whole system of rational agents;" while "the utmost of our power" is explained by the statement: "Effecting the greatest good is the greatest end prescribed by reason." The possibility of comparing goods and evils and of conceiving a "sum of goods" is explicitly asserted (Ch. II, sec. iv, p. 101; Ch. V, sec. xvi, p. 213; *cf.* Ch. V, sec. xix, p. 220). And a beginning is made towards showing how the requirements of the maximum attainable amount of happiness call for special duties such as those to one's children, and special privileges with their correlative rights and duties, as in the matter of private property.*

Rationalism and Utilitarianism are persistently treated as if they were antithetical, so that to belong to one school is to be excluded from the other. But this conception is thoroughly mistaken. Theories of the moral judgment, as I pointed out in the last Chapter (p. 305), may be regarded from two points of view. They may be classified first according to their conception of the nature of the standard; and secondly according to their theory of the source of the standard. The latter theories, as I have also pointed out, may be divided into two classes which may be called Rationalism and Voluntarism.

If we understand the meaning of our terms, then, we shall have no difficulty in conceiving a Utilitarianism which is also a Rationalism. And as if to prove to all the world the possibility of such a combination, the earliest full-fledged Utilitarian in the history of modern ethics has a theory of the source of moral distinctions which is the very quintessence of Rationalism. For one of the characteristic features of Cumberland's system is the

[13] Cumberland wrote in Latin, and his book bore the title *De Legibus Naturæ*. The quotations which follow are from the English translation made by John Maxwell, and published in London, 1727.

* See Notes, XVII, "Richard Cumberland," page 516.

attempt to exhibit the standard of right as a product of the logical principle of contradiction. His formula for the standard has just been given. What then, is the connection between the law of contradiction and "the endeavor, to the utmost of our power, to promote the common good of the whole system of rational agents?" Cumberland holds, in the first place, that where choice is necessary, and where the good of other persons is not concerned, reason requires us to choose our own greater good in preference to our less. To do otherwise would, in his eyes, be equivalent to affirming that the greater is less than the less. But the mind "is inconsistent with itself when it determines to act after one manner in relation to itself, and after another manner in relation to others that partake of the same nature." [14] When he says "inconsistent," he conceives himself to be saying "guilty of self-contradiction," for he treats these two terms as identical.[15] Hence, the following is, for him, but another way of reasserting the same statement: "As 'tis a perfection of the human mind to form like judgments, so it is to entertain like affections concerning like things. To have contrary judgments of like things implies a contradiction, and is a kind of madness, and, in speculation, is shunned as a disease of the mind. In practice it argues as great an imperfection, and is a direct contradiction, in cases perfectly alike to have different judgments and different volitions, according as myself or another is concerned." [16]

Cumberland's argument seems to me just to graze one of the most important truths which ethics has given to the world. This is the proposition: Whatever reasons there are for approving my choice of my own greater good in preference to my less, precisely these same reasons hold for the approbation of the choice of the greater good of another in preference to the less good of self. To approve the former and not the latter is an inconsistency in judgment, and to act on the former and refuse to act upon the latter is an inconsistency in conduct.[17] Cumberland, however, confused the concepts of the inconsistent and the con-

[14] *Op. cit.*, I, vi, 4; *cf.* V, xiv, 2.
[15] See for example *op. cit.*, V, xxi, 2.
[16] *Op. cit.*, V, xvi, 5.
[17] *Cf.* below, Chapter XXIII, p. 483.

tradictory. This identification can not be maintained. To accept contradictions is to believe differently about the same thing, while the pursuit of the inconsistent involves feeling and desiring differently about the same thing. The former is absolutely impossible when the contradictoriness of the two propositions is clearly perceived. The latter is unfortunately quite possible, even when vision of the situation is most complete. Cumberland's theory, then, seems to me one which we can not accept as it stands, but one from which we can learn a great deal of the first importance.

### Henry Sidgwick

Almost exactly two hundred years after the publication of Cumberland's *Laws of Nature,* appeared a second attempt to exhibit the standard of Universalistic Utilitarianism as a product of intuitive reason. The modern system seems to me to have, on the whole, more affinities with Whewell than it has with Cumberland. The denial of the superior claims of the greater good is indeed tentatively treated as a breach of the principle of contradiction;[18] but in the last analysis the reigning conception seems to be that of a system of intuitions, discovered as Whewell supposed the mathematician discovers the axioms of his science. These intuitions are formulated by Sidgwick as follows. Justice; "It can not be right for A to treat B in a manner in which it would be wrong for B to treat A, merely on the ground that they are two different individuals, and without there being any difference between the natures or circumstances of the two which can be stated as a reasonable ground for differences of treatment." Prudence: "A smaller present good [of self] is not to be preferred to a greater future good"—allowing of course for differences in certainty. Benevolence: "Each one is morally bound to regard the good of any other individual as much as his own, except in so far as he judges it to be less, when impartially viewed, or less certainly knowable or attainable by him."[19] The third rule means that we ought always to prefer

[18] *The Methods of Ethics,* Book IV, Ch. ii.
[19] *The Methods of Ethics,* 7th Edition, 1907, Book III, Ch. xiii, sec. 3.

the greater good of another or others to the less good of self.

These principles of conduct, I can not but believe, are incapable of supplying an intuitive code of duty in the sense in which Sidgwick or any other Rationalist would interpret the term *intuitive*. That is to say, they can not pass the tests which Sidgwick has himself laid down to enable us to distinguish between genuine axioms and mere pretenders to that title.[20] In the first place the formula for justice is obviously merely a replica of Kant's categorical imperative. It says: What is right for one is right for everyone else under essentially the same conditions. But as we saw above this is no part of the standard of right; it is simply an element in the definition of the term. In other words it does not direct me what to do, but merely tells me that after I have discovered my duty I may be certain it will be identical with the duty of everyone else who is similarly circumstanced. As to the second axiom, I can not convince myself that injury to one's personal interests, where other persons are supposed not to be concerned, is universally regarded by the lay conscience as wrong. If the conclusions of Chapter VII of this book are valid, we do wrong ourselves when we choose the less good for self rather than the greater. But I should assert this as a conclusion derived from an analysis of the logical implications of the moral judgment, rather than as an immediate or unreasoned deliverance of the moral consciousness of the race. However this may be, the third principle, which covers all our duties to others, is certainly not one that conforms to the test that an axiom "must command universal assent on the part of those who understand [its] meaning." As a matter of fact the great majority of the race, including civilized and primitive man alike, believe that under certain circumstances the good of the nearer or the good of the more excellent has the primacy over the greater good; and wherever tribal morality flourishes the good of those outside the tribal pale simply counts for the most part as zero. Add to this the absolutely contradictory attitudes taken by different persons toward revenge—a fact

[20] See above, Chapter XVI, page 313.

which Sidgwick quite ignores—and the conclusion seems unescapable that all attempts to represent the principles of Universalistic Utilitarianism as the utterances of pure reason have failed in the past and appear to be doomed to a like fate in the future.

### Shaftesbury

Voluntarism, as we have seen, is the theory that moral judgments have their source in some element or elements of the will. Egoistic Utilitarianism, ancient and modern, holds this view quite unambiguously; moral distinctions owe their existence to desire—the desire, namely, for one's own pleasure. As I have suggested, this view of the relation of desire to the moral ideal seems to be implicit in all the other ancient theories, whether of Greece or Asia, however radically they may have differed from each other in their account of the object of the desire.

Modern Voluntarism of the Universalistic type begins with the Earl of Shaftesbury. Shaftesbury's position is apparently derived from Aristotle with a certain twist of its own. But this twist, like the distance separating two rain drops at the crest of a watershed, makes an enormous difference in the termini of the two systems.

Aristotle, we remember, declares that morality represents a mean between two extremes. There is on the one hand rashness and on the other cowardice. Courage is a mean between the two. Again, gentleness is the mean between the excesses of an uncontrolled anger and the deficiencies attendant upon a want of spirit. The proper balance between these two is recognized infallibly by the moral connoisseur, and appeals to him for the most part as beautiful.

This represents Shaftesbury's position with two important differences. He rejects entirely the permissibility of any form of malevolence; and he finds morality to consist invariably in a proper balance of what he regards as the two other master impulses of human nature, "public affections and private affections," or as we should say, egoism and altruism. "Public affections" are usually too weak and "private affections" too strong; but "public affections may be too strong and private too

weak."[21] Right action consists in the maintenance of a proper balance between the two.

Thus is Shaftesbury led to Universalistic Utilitarianism. The implication throughout seems to be that the "proper" balance represents such a relationship between egoism and altruism as will contribute most completely to the good of all concerned.[22] But this is nowhere stated in so many words.

For Aristotle a proper balance of impulses ordinarily produces beauty. This is precisely Shaftesbury's position if for "ordinarily" you read "always."

> "The mind, which is spectator or auditor of other minds, can not be without its eye and ear; so as to discern proportion, distinguish sound, and scan each sentiment or thought which comes before it. . . [It] finds a foul and fair, a harmonious and a dissonant as really and truly here as in any musical numbers, or in the outward forms or representations of sensible things. Nor can it withhold its admiration and ecstasy, its aversion and scorn, any more in what relates to one than to the other of these subjects. So that to deny the common and natural sense of a sublime and beautiful in things, will appear an affectation merely, to any one who considers duly of this affair."[23]

This æsthetic element in morality is not a by-product, it is the very center of the moral experience. For "virtue is no other than the love of order and beauty in society.[24] This means that where the mind finds in an action a certain relation between egoism and altruism, namely that proportion which makes for the good of the whole organism of which the individual is a part, it experiences an emotion of the beautiful which constitutes moral approbation.

It is this reaction in the way of a feeling of æsthetic appreciation that constitutes man a moral being in the strict sense of the term. A creature possessed of no other volitional equipment than egoism and altruism, however perfectly balanced they were, might be called a good creature but not a moral one. Moral conduct, properly so called, is that which is motivated in part

[21] "Inquiry concerning Virtue or Merit," Book II, Part I, sec. iii; in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times,* 5th Edition, 1732, Vol. II, pp. 87-97.

[22] See *op. cit.,* Vol. II, pp. 31, 77, 91 ff.

[23] *Op. cit.,* Vol. II, p. 29.

[24] *Op. cit.,* Vol. II, p. 75.

at least, by love for the beauty inherent in the harmonious play of the personal and social elements of the will.

The ethical views of Shaftesbury, detached, casual, incomplete, sketchy, represent the work of a gentleman of leisure who is interested not in creating a system but rather in meditating, as he felt disposed, upon the relation of religion and morality, the compatibility of virtue with individual happiness, and the existence of a philosophical basis for religious belief. Such contributions as he made to ethics appear for the most part in the course of the treatment of these or related topics. He was followed by a man who was a university professor all his active life, and who attempted to systematize Shaftesbury's apercus, work them out to their logical conclusion, and form them into a consistent whole. This man was Francis Hutcheson.

### Francis Hutcheson

The fundamental difference between Hutcheson and Shaftesbury is that the former supposes the reaction which is the source of the moral judgment to be aroused not by a balance between egoism and altruism, but solely by the latter. Therewith disappears the æsthetic factor of the earlier system. Moral distinctions have their source not in admiration but in "approbation." If we inquire what the nature of this state may be we learn only that it has a pleasurable quality; in fact to approve conduct seems to be defined merely as finding pleasure in contemplating it. The inner side of the moral judgment is thus differently conceived in the two systems, and apparently there is an equally striking difference in their doctrine of the standard. The latter, however, is not the case. Each writer gives precisely the same answer to the question, What kinds of action are right or wrong? For while, according to Hutcheson, merely egoistic action can arouse no moral approbation, nevertheless a man is justified in regarding his own good as having equal claims upon him with that of anyone else where the amount, objectively appraised, is the same. All this is taken up into his formula for the standard, which is one of the most celebrated in the history

of ethics. That action, he holds, is best which procures the greatest happiness for the greatest numbers.[25]

### David Hume

Certain serious difficulties readily suggest themselves in considering the preceding views. Some of the more important are as follows:

1. Moral judgments are not, as Shaftesbury believes, always æsthetic in nature. Indeed most of them are passed without any suggestion of beauty appearing in the mind. This is true, for example, of our judgments upon ordinary acts of honesty and faithfulness to promises.

2. Moral judgments do not necessarily involve a process of balancing one spring of action against another on the part of the agent. He may quite literally forget self and its interests in some overwhelming concern for a fellow-man who needs his help. Or, if he is properly trained, he may tell the truth without any thought of its harmful consequences to himself. On the other hand he may destroy others out of sheer malice without any particular thought of the satisfaction he will get out of it. This latter case, to be sure, Shaftesbury thinks he has provided for by declaring that all malevolent desire is an object of universal disapprobation. But if this statement is to include the impulse to revenge it simply is not true.

3. As against Hutcheson it may be urged that the place of "approbation" in his system is equivocal. It is formally identified with pleasure. But pleasure never appears in consciousness alone, nor, apparently, in connection with bare ideas;[26] so that there is no analogy anywhere in human life to its alleged arousal by the idea of a certain kind of action. Phenomena without analogy, like principles, are not to be multiplied beyond necessity. If it can be shown that all the facts are explicable upon the hypothesis that the benevolence which serves as the motive of a good act is also the source of that satisfaction with the

[25] *Inquiry Concerning the Original of Our Ideas of Virtue or Moral Good,* pp. 169, 170, 180-182.

[26] See below, Chapter xix, page 395.

volition which we denominate approbation, then there is no necessity for a theory which finds the source of moral distinctions in a bare feeling of pleasure, or, for that matter, in an emotion *sui generis*, as Hutcheson is by some persons supposed to have taught.

The place of the greatest representative of this school, David Hume, in the development of Voluntarism is to be found precisely at this point. He accepted the Universalistic Utilitarianism of his predecessors. But he saw that to a being possessed of an interest in the welfare of his fellow men, the will of A to serve B must be a cause of satisfaction. And he believed he could explain all the facts by identifying this satisfaction with moral approbation.

The source of the moral judgment, according to Hume, is to be found in a direct concern for the good of others which arouses in the judge a feeling of satisfaction at an action directed toward this end, and a consequent feeling of gratitude or affection toward the agent. Our desires for the good of others are apparently regarded as always the product of special stimulants. These may be, on one hand, ties of blood, affection, gratitude, or admiration; on the other, the workings of the imagination. Altruism stimulated by the imagination, Hume commonly calls "sympathy." The first named stimulants produce only a personal interest in particular individuals here and there. Sympathy alone is impersonal and catholic. Accordingly it is to sympathy, as just defined, that our moral judgments are declared to be due.

To this view of the source of moral distinctions there is an obvious objection. It is stated by Hume as follows:

"As this sympathy is very variable, it may be thought that our sentiments of morals must admit of all the same variations. We sympathise more with persons contiguous to us than with persons remote from us; with our acquaintances than with strangers; with our countrymen, than with foreigners. But notwithstanding this variation of our sympathy, we give the same approbation to the same moral qualities in China as in England. They appear equally virtuous, and recommend themselves equally to the esteem of a judicious spectator. The sympathy varies without a variation in our esteem. Our esteem, therefore, proceeds not from sympathy."[21]

[21] *Treatise*, Book II, Part III, sec. I; Green and Grose Edition, Vol. II., p. 340; Selby-Bigge Edition, p. 580.

The reply takes the form of a further definition or limitation of the meaning of *right*. The predicate *right* does not cover everything that happens to appeal to the passing sympathy of the moment; nor does it fail to include forms of good that may happen to leave our feelings cold. The play of sympathy is affected, as Hume has shown in various places, by our relationships to the persons concerned, our distance from them in time and space, the nature and limitations of our own past experience, the efficiency of the working of the imagination, familiarity, and the preoccupations or humors of the hour. When we call an action right we suppose ourselves to have abstracted from these conditions, that is to say from all the accidental relationships of the action in question to self, whatever their nature.

"Nor is every sentiment of pleasure or pain which arises from characters and actions, of that *peculiar* kind, which makes us praise or condemn. The good qualities of an enemy are hurtful to us; but may still command our esteem and respect. 'Tis only when a character is considered in general, without reference to our particular interest, that it causes such a feeling or sentiment, as denominates it morally good or evil." [28]

The moral judgment is the judgment of the impersonal spectator.

In the *Treatise* the moral judgment (as just defined) and the vocabulary to which it gives rise is represented as a device whereby we find a common means of communication with others; just as we more or less arbitrarily fix upon one visual size or shape as the "real" one, and thereafter use this as a standard of reference. This point of view reappears in the *Enquiry*.[29] But the *Enquiry* also presents a far more adequate conception.

"The distinction between these species of sentiments ['humanity' and egoism] being so great and evident, language must soon be moulded upon it, and must invent a peculiar set of terms, in order to express those universal sentiments of censure or approbation, which arise from humanity, or from views of general usefulness and its contrary." [30]

[28] *Treatise*, Book III, Part I, sec. II; G. II., p. 248; S.-B., p. 472.

[29] *Treatise*, Book III, Part III, sec. I; G., 341; S.-B., 581. *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, Sec. V., part ii.; Green and Grose Edition of Hume's *Essays*, Vol. II., p. 214 f; Selby-Bigge Edition of the Enquiries, p. 227 f.

[30] Sec. ix, part i.; Green and Grose, *Essays*, II., 248 ff.; Selby-Bigge, *Enquiries*, 271 ff; *cf. Treatise*, Book III, Part I, sec. ii.; G. II., 248; S.-B., 472.

In other words there being in fact two attitudes towards human conduct, the personal and the impersonal, the latter as well as the former will create forms for expressing itself in language.

It will be apparent that the preceding is nothing more nor less than the definition of *right* presented in Chapter VII of this book. The latter was, as a matter of fact, derived precisely from this source.

### Objectivity in Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Hume

Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Hume were regarded by the Rationalists of their day as Subjectivists. Each believed in objectivity, however, as firmly as any Rationalist.[31] They are thus as much entitled to the name of "Objectivists" as any of their opponents. If it be claimed that, as a matter of fact, they did not succeed in proving the objectivity of moral distinctions, it is possible to counter with the assertion that the Voluntarists did not believe the Rationalists to have proved it either. A school of thought must in fairness be classified with reference to its own beliefs and not in accordance with its opponents' opinions as to its success or failure in demonstrating them. Accordingly the term Subjectivist, applied to these men, is a misnomer, if not a libel.

All three of these writers worked out a theory of the causes of the actual divergences of moral judgments which was intended to exhibit the essential superficiality of these variations, and the possibility of uniting a frank recognition of their existence with a firm conviction of the fundamental identity of the moral consciousness of the race. Shaftesbury, as usual, makes no attempt to offer anything better than a few scattered suggestions. His most important contribution to the subject is contained in

[31] Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks*, Vol. II, pp. 36, 43; Vol. III, p. 303. Hutcheson, "Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue," 4th Edition, 1738," *Treatise II*, Sec. 4, i and ii, pp. 200-203; "Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions," 3rd Edition, 1742, *Treatise II*, Sec. I, p. 236; *Ibid.*, Sec. IV, p. 280; *Moral Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 24 and following. Hume, *Treatise*, Book III, Part I, sec. ii; G. II, 250; S.-B., 474; *Ibid.*, Part III, sec. vi, G. II, 373; S.-B., 620.

the following words: "Whatever causes a misconception or misapprehension of the worth or value of any object, so as to diminish a due, or raise any undue, irregular, or unsocial affection, must necessarily be the occasion of wrong." [32] This principle seems to be an adumbration of the principle of objective valuation as stated in Chapter VIII above. But according to his wont, Shaftesbury leaves it undeveloped, as well as, in the main, unused. Failure to evaluate properly, however, he attributes to two causes: (1) The dust which selfishness and anger throw into our eyes; and (2) the influence exerted by authority as made known by the voice of public opinion or God.[33]

Hutcheson, equally convinced of the existence of objectivity in morals, is distinctly more systematic and more concrete in his treatment of the subject.[34] He finds the principal grounds for diversity in moral judgments to be the following. (1) "Different opinions of happiness or natural good, and of the most effectual means to advance it." The latter applies to outer morality only, as Hutcheson must have known, for he was very insistent upon the distinction between this and inner morality. The former, as his own words indicate, is a difference in judgments of good rather than of right. I have referred to this subject in Chapter XI, above, when discussing the causes of the differences between primitive and civilized marriage codes. We shall return to it in Chapter XXI.

2. The use of the principle that the less excellent have either less claims than other people or none at all. He recognizes correctly the part this plays in the creation of tribal morality, and supposes its employment is due to a mistaken calculation of utility; it being "regular and beautiful, to have stronger benevolence toward the morally good parts of mankind, who are useful to the whole, than towards the useless or pernicious." [35]

[32] *Characteristics,* Vol. II, p. 33.

[33] For the first see *op. cit.,* Vol. II, pp. 30, 44, 52, 62-63; *cf.* Vol. III, pp. 303-305. For the second see Vol. II, pp. 47-49, 64.

[34] "Inquiry," *Treatise II,* Sec. 4, p. 200 ff; Sec. 7, xii, p. 301; "Conduct of the Passions," *Treatise I,* Sec. IV, p. 106; *Treatise II,* Sec. I, p. 236; Sec. IV, p. 280. *Moral Philosophy,* Vol. I, p. 89 ff.

[35] "Inquiry," p. 209.

3. Differences of opinion as to the will of God.

It might be supposed that Hume, coming as he did after Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, would offer a more complete and illuminating account of the variations in moral judgment than either of his predecessors; and that, with his conception of the meaning of right, he would see the relationship of these variations to the possibility of a universally valid code. He recognizes unequivocally that morality is a matter of motives or character;[36] and, as we remember, he knows that right means the desires or approvals of an impersonal judge. In one place he affirms the superior claim of the greater good of self over that of a smaller good the enjoyment of which is less remote in time;[37] and in other places he applies the principle underlying this dictum to the relation between the good of self and others.[38] He states clearly the principle of the good of the nearer in its application to moral judgments, and declares it invalid because a case of "partiality and unequal affection."[39] He is aware of the existence of the judgments that directly approve preferential treatment of the meritorious and the infliction of suffering upon the evil doer, although he expresses no opinion as to their correctness.[40] Here is practically all the material needed for solving the problem of objectivity. As a matter of fact, in his one systematic discussion of the subject he turns his back upon it completely and resolves all differences of moral judgment into differences of opinion as to the effects of conduct upon happiness, that is to say, into differences in judgments of outer rightness.[41] This is an extraordinary instance of a man holding all the cards and failing to play them in the game he was making every effort to win. The explanation, I suppose, must be found in his entire history as a writer on ethics. But whatever the explanation, the facts them-

[36] *Treatise,* Book III, Part II, sec. i; G. 252-3; S.-B. pp. 477-478. *Ibid.,* Part I, sec. ii; G. 247-248; S.-B. pp. 471-472.

[37] Part II, sec. vii; G. II 301-302; S.-B. 536.

[38] *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals,* Sec. III, part i., *Essays* G. Vol. II, page 180; *Enquiries* S.-B. 184. "Essay on Suicide," *Essays,* Green and Grose ed., Vol. II, p. 413 Compare also *Treatise,* Book III, Part II, sec. vii; G. 300; S.-B. 534.

[39] *Treatise,* Part II, sec. 2; G. 261-2 S.-B. 488-9; *cf.* Part III, sec. 1; G. II, 341-342; S.-B. 582-583.

[40] Part III, sec. i; G. II, 349; S.-B. 591.

[41] In the essay entitled, "A Dialogue."

selves must ever remain surprising. It has been the central aim of this book to bring together in systematic form the data supplied by this great man and use them to illumine and, if it may be, solve the ancient problem of the objectivity of moral distinctions.

*Book II*

# THE GOOD

## Chapter XVIII

# THE BEST THINGS OF LIFE

Ethics, as we saw in Chapter I, deals with two concepts, the right and the good. Having considered the more important problems of right, we turn to those of the good.

This subject may be treated in either of two ways. A definition of good may be obtained through analysis and then used to determine what it is which makes an experience good. Or a survey of the significant features of life may be made for the purpose of discovering which of them are best worth pursuing, without stopping to inquire precisely what it is which gives them their value. I shall employ the first method in the two following Chapters, and the second in the present one.

In this more general discussion I intend to leave the reader as free as possible from the burden of definitions, but a few, unfortunately, are indispensable. *Good* as applied to an experience or state of consciousness, means that it is valuable or worth having. This statement will serve our present purposes without further refinements. But it is quite necessary to bear in mind one distinction already made (Chapter X, page 166), namely that between extrinsic (or "instrumental") and intrinsic goodness, between what is good, or valuable, as a means and what is good as an end in itself. The possession of money is an example of the former; the enjoyment of a beautiful landscape, of the latter. Many things, of course, are both, as health or friends. We shall here confine our attention exclusively to the good in itself; and we shall deal with such goods as health only from the side of their intrinsic value.

### The Need for Reflection upon Values

The need of reflection as to what are the best things of life is perhaps even more imperative than reflection about what actions are right or wrong. With regard to the latter we can ordinarily

avail ourselves of an ancient, comprehensive, and widely recognized tradition. This is indeed far from complete; and at many points it is vague, confused, and self-contradictory. But it is sound and clear in its utterances as far as most of the fundamentals are concerned. On the other hand, the generally accepted views with regard to what is best worth seeking in life are to a large extent quite superficial and reek with error. Consider, for example, the crude conceptions current in American society about the value of those things which can be obtained only through the possession of wealth. We try to teach the young what is right and what is wrong, but seldom say anything to them about the distinction between real and delusory goods. Unlike the Greeks of the Periclean Age and their descendants, and the Romans of the imperial period, the need of any enlightenment on this subject never seems to occur to us.

Professor Huxley tells the story of a traveler who, brought to a halt at the crossroads and finding no signpost, is looking about for someone of whom he can ask the way. Presently he spies a man on horseback galloping towards him at breakneck speed. With some difficulty he succeeds in bringing horse and rider to a standstill long enough to ask where the two roads lead, but is greeted upon each question with the answer: "I'm sure I don't know." "But where are you going?" asks the traveler. Putting spurs to his horse, the rider, who of course is an Irishman, shouts back from out of the enveloping cloud of dust: "I don't know where I am going, but I am going at a divil of a pace." This little tale pictures with essential accuracy a great part of contemporary American and European life.

This indifference to the problem of values can not be justified by the existence in man of infallible powers of insight which enable him at a glance to distinguish between genuine happiness and its counterfeit. Thus it is commonly supposed that if any persons are favorites of fortune it must be the rich and those possessed of "position" in the business or social world. But this popular notion happens to be quite remote from the facts. "Position" with its attendant advantages is certainly no guarantee of happiness. The greatest and most admired actor that America has ever produced was Edwin Booth. He had the appreciation

of the public, both critical and uncritical, till he himself could say of his later years that they were "tediously successful." Yet this is the way he felt about his life. In 1888, five years before his death, he wrote to his daughter:

"Dick Stoddard wrote a poem called 'The King's Bell,' which fits my case exactly. He dedicated it to Lorimer Graham, who never knew an unhappy day in his brief life, instead of to me, who never knew a really happy one. You must not suppose from this that I'm ill in mind or body; on the contrary, I am well enough in both; nor am I a pessimist. I merely wanted you to know that the sugar of my life is bittersweet; perhaps not more so than every man's whose experience has been above and below the surface."[1]

Power can not procure happiness. A few years before his death Bismarck said: "Seldom in my life have I been a happy man." Still less can money make life worth living. Nathan Rothschild, who died in 1860, possessed a fabulous fortune. "But with all his colossal wealth he was profoundly unhappy, and with sorrowful earnestness exclaimed to one congratulating him on the gorgeous magnificence of his palatial mansion and thence inferring he was happy: 'Happy! Me happy!' "[2]

These utterances do not prove that happiness is impossible. For each could be matched by one of the opposite tenor. Thus Benjamin Franklin, in the second paragraph of his *Autobiography*, writes:

"This good fortune, when I reflect on it, which is frequently the case, has sometimes induced me to say that if I were left to my choice I should have no objection to go over the same life from its beginning to its end; requesting only the advantage authors have of correcting in a second edition the faults of the first. So would I also wish to change some incidents of it, for others more favorable. Notwithstanding, if this condition was denied, I should still accept the offer of recommencing the same life."

Franklin was so exceptional a man and had so exceptional a career that his testimony may possibly be regarded as uninstructive. But witnesses innumerable to the same faith could easily be brought together, if necessary, ranging from rich to

[1] C. T. Copeland, *Edwin Booth*, p. 150.
[2] William Mathews, *Getting on in the World*, p. 292.

poor, famous to obscure, gifted to commonplace. No one, perhaps, ever expressed this attitude towards life with more delightful naïveté than the good old merchant Peter Cooper, the founder of Cooper Union in New York. When asked by a friend about his belief in immortality, he replied:

"I sometimes think that if one has too good a time here below there is less reason for him to go to Heaven. I have had a very good time, but I know poor creatures whose lives have been spent in a constant struggle for existence. They should have some reward hereafter. . . The only doubts that I have about the future are whether I have not had too good a time on earth."[3]

We can thus find the happy and the unhappy alike in every social stratum; and, I may add, in not far from the same proportions. If so, position in the sense of superiority to other people, and wealth, are peripheral values. The central values, on the other hand, those which make a man wish, as he looks back over the road he has been traveling, "to go over the same life from its beginning to its end," are of a very different nature.

### Why Business and Social Position Are Disappointing

Why business and social position are disappointing has been so admirably set forth by the eighteenth century moralist, William Paley, that I am going to borrow his statement of the subject as it stands. Paley was not a great man. But he had unusual opportunities of knowing all grades of the English society of his day; and he possessed a keen eye and a humane spirit. His thesis is that happiness does not consist in "greatness, rank, or elevated station." He attempts to prove this proposition by showing, first, that the pleasures of superiority are open on equal terms to the members of every class in the community; and second, that these pleasures are well-nigh worthless.

"Were it true that all superiority afforded pleasure, it would follow, that, by how much we were the greater, that is, the more persons we were superior to, in the same proportion, so far as depended upon this cause, we should be the happier; but so it is, that no superiority yields any satisfaction, save that which we possess or obtain over those with whom we immediately compare ourselves. The shepherd perceives no

[3] Parton, *Captains of Industry*, Ser. I, p. 331.

pleasure in his superiority over his dog; the farmer in his superiority over the shepherd; the lord in his superiority over the farmer; nor the king, lastly, in his superiority over the lord. Superiority, where there is no competition, is seldom contemplated; what most men indeed are quite unconscious of.

"But if the same shepherd can run, fight or wrestle better than the peasants of his village; if the farmer can show better cattle, if he keep a better horse, or be supposed to have a longer purse than any farmer in the hundred; if the lord have more interest in an election, greater favor at court, a better house, or larger estate, than any nobleman in the county; if the king possess a more extensive territory, a more powerful fleet or army, a more splendid establishment, more loyal subjects, or more weight and authority in adjusting the affairs of nations, than any prince in Europe; in all these cases the parties feel an actual satisfaction in their superiority.

"Now the conclusion that follows from hence is this—that the pleasures of ambition, which are supposed to be peculiar to high stations, are in reality common to all conditions. The farrier who shoes a horse better, and who is in greater request for skill than any man within ten miles of him, possesses, for all that I can see, the delight of distinction and of excelling as truly and substantially as the statesman, the soldier, and the scholar, who have filled Europe with the reputation of their wisdom, their valor, or their knowledge.

"No superiority appears to be of any account but superiority over a rival. This, it is manifest, may exist wherever rivalships do; and rivalships fall out among men of all ranks and degrees. The object of emulation, the dignity or magnitude of this object, makes no difference; as it is not what either possesses that constitutes the pleasure, but what one possesses more than the other.

"Our position is that happiness does not consist in greatness. And this position we make out by showing that even what are supposed to be the peculiar advantages of greatness, the pleasures of ambition and superiority, are in reality common to all conditions. But whether the pursuits of ambition be ever wise, whether they contribute more to the happiness or misery of the pursuers, is a different question; and a question concerning which we may be allowed to entertain great doubt. The pleasure of success is exquisite; so also is the anxiety of the pursuit, and the pain of disappointment—and what is the worst part of the account, the pleasure is short lived. We soon cease to look back upon those whom we have left behind; new contests are engaged in, new prospects unfold themselves; a succession of struggles is kept up whilst there is a rival left within the compass of our views and possession; and when there is none, the pleasure, with the pursuit, is at an end."[4]

Two problems, it will be remembered, are before us: The place of social position and of wealth in a satisfactory scheme of life.

[4] *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy*, Book I, Ch. VI.

The former, as we see, is a comparatively isolated and simple one. The latter, on the other hand, can only be discussed in the light of all the interests whose claims we are to assess. I shall therefore defer its treatment till the end of the Chapter.

### The Glow of Health

In turning to the constructive task of attempting to enumerate and characterize the positive values of life I shall begin with one whose importance no one can deliberately deny, but whose significance and indeed existence are ignored in much of the literature of the subject. I shall call it provisionally a happy temperament. The term *temperament* is really indefinable, but happiness of temperament may be identified as unmotived joy in living. He who possesses this gift in large measure need fear no foe. Sickness, poverty, loneliness, estrangement from friends, failure of ambition, all these and more may fall to his lot, and yet he will remain contented, cheerful, a lover of life, thankful for the past, and hopeful for the future. The wistful melancholy of Booth seems to have been chiefly a matter of temperament. The habitual optimism of Franklin would be regarded by many as a consequence of his uninterrupted success in attaining everything he set out to get. But this will not account for the presence of the same spirit in certain ordinary persons whom each of us knows, who have had very commonplace careers and a very small share of what are called the good things of life.

The causes of temperament, whether joyous or melancholy, are to a considerable extent enveloped in obscurity. But I believe we know enough today to say it is dependent primarily, if not solely, upon the physical condition of the body. It is not, indeed, a function of health in the popular sense of the term, since an habitually melancholy man like Lincoln may turn off a tremendous amount of work in a life time; and a few invalids have been among the most cheerful of human beings. It seems rather to depend upon the condition of specific parts of the body, the most important of which are the blood, the heart, the organs of digestion and excretion, and the nervous system. We may take as an illustration the well-known case of Thomas Carlyle.

From the time he was twenty-four till he was nearly sixty, Carlyle suffered with acute indigestion which not merely at times produced intense pain, but which threw over his life for this entire period a black pall of melancholy. Says one of his biographers:

"The melancholy, 'often as of deep misery frozen torpid' that runs through his writings, that makes him forecast death in life, and paint the springs of nature in winter lure, the 'hoarse sea,' the 'bleared skies,' the sunsets 'beautiful and brief and wae' [sad] compels our compassion in a manner quite different from the pictures of Sterne and other color dramatists, because we feel it as genuine as the melancholy of Burns . . . 'Look up there,' said Leigh Hunt, pointing to the starry skies, 'look at that glorious harmony that sings with infinite voices an eternal song of hope in the soul of man.' 'Eh, it's a sair sicht,' [sad sight] was the reply."[5]

At the height of his success (1840, aged forty-five) Carlyle wrote: "I shall never be other than ill, wearied, sick-hearted . . . bilious, heartless, and forlorn." Seven years later he describes himself as afflicted with "a huge nightmare of indigestion, insomnia, and fits of black impatience with myself and others,—self chiefly." His biographer, Froude, can not understand it.

"One asks with wonder why he found existence so intolerable. . . He was now successful far beyond his hopes. The fashionable world admired and flattered him. The cleverest men had recognized his genius, and accepted him as their equal or superior. He was listened to with respect by all; and, far more valuable to him, he was believed in by a fast increasing circle as a dear and honored teacher. His money anxieties were over. . . Why could not Carlyle, with fame and honor and troops of friends, and the gates of a great career thrown open before him, and a great intellect and a conscience untroubled by a single act which he need regret, bear and forget too? Why, indeed! The only answer is that Carlyle was Carlyle."

So much for the biographer. But Carlyle himself knew better; "I declare solemnly without exaggeration that I impute nine-tenths of my present wretchedness and rather more than nine-tenths of all my faults to this infernal disorder in the stomach." In view of this statement of Carlyle's, of whose substantial truth there can be no doubt, it is not remarkable that DeQuincey, who

[5] John Nichols, *Thomas Carlyle*, p. 158.

suffered in the same way from the same causes, should write as follows:

"The whole process and elaborate machinery of digestion are felt to be mean and humiliating when viewed in relation to our mere animal economy. But they rise into dignity and assert their own supreme importance when they are studied from another station, *viz.*, in relation to the intellect and temper. No man dares then to despise them. It is then seen that these functions of the human system form the essential basis upon which the strength and health of our higher nature repose, and that upon these functions chiefly the genial happiness of life is dependent. All the rules of prudence, or gifts of experience that life can accumulate, will never do as much for human comfort and welfare, as would be done by a stricter attention, and a wiser science, directed to the digestive system."*

In the case of Carlyle the symptoms were so definite that he could not doubt for a moment the existence of disease. But where the failure of the organs to do their work is less marked, the depression may appear without being attributed by the victim to physical causes. Amiel is an example. He was a professor of philosophy at Geneva who died some thirty years ago and left behind him a *Journal intime* which has been widely read and greatly admired. The book has a markedly pessimistic tone throughout. Amiel says that a wave of gloom came over him every day after dinner, and, after reaching its height by the middle of the afternoon, gradually passed away. No physician would have been in doubt for a moment as to the source of the "wave."

It is less easy to prove that unmotived joy in living is a normal accompaniment of perfect health, because, for one reason, the existence of perfect health is doubtless today very rare and its presence is hard to demonstrate in any particular case. It is easy to show, however, that this state of the feelings can be produced by physical causes. It is a consequent, among other things, of breathing pure oxygen. It also appears in the first stages of intoxication by alcohol, opium, and haschisch.

"'Under the influence of haschisch,' says Moreau, who has studied it so well, 'the feeling which is experienced is one of happiness. I mean

*The above quotations, with the exception of the first, are from *Biographic Clinics* (*First Series*), by George M. Gould, M. D.

by this a state which has nothing in common with purely sensual pleasure. It is not the pleasure of the glutton or the drunkard, but is much more comparable to the joy of the miser, or that caused by good news.' I once knew well a man who for ten years constantly took haschisch in large doses; he withstood the drug better than might be expected, and finally died insane. I received his oral and written confidences, often to a greater extent than I desired. During this long period I have often noted his feelings of inexhaustible satisfaction, translated now and again into strange inventions or commonplace reflections, but in his opinion invaluable."[1]

Another illustration of this principle, not the result of borrowing from the resources of the body at frightful rates of interest, is the feeling of well-being which, in the person of average strength, follows vigorous bodily exercise.

On the whole it seems safe to assert that unmotived joy in living has its source in the perfect operation of certain organs of the body. If so, we may term this form of good the glow of health. This nomenclature has the additional advantage of calling attention to the fact that high spirits may make their appearance for limited periods only. We should be violating linguistic usage if we referred such a state of mind to temperament, for the latter is supposed to be relatively permanent. Nevertheless it is certainly a good as long as it lasts. Furthermore in bringing into the foreground the healthy working of the bodily organs we suggest the possibility of a more effective control of the conditions of happiness in the future, through the progress of the sciences of hygiene and medicine, than has ever obtained in the past.

The glow of health, like every other good thing, has its dangers. The man who is habitually in high spirits is apt to see everything through the rosy haze of hope. He finds it difficult to bring himself to estimate dangers properly or to face inevitable evils. It seems to be a law of life that as every evil has its compensation so every good shall have its offset. But this fact does not turn the good itself into an evil.

[1] Ribot, *The Psychology of the Emotions*, Eng. tr., p. 8.

### Craftsmanship

The second constituent of happiness which I shall describe is the exercise of craftsmanship. By this I mean the employment of skill in the pursuit of an end. This skill may be intellectual or muscular. But of course the second is always, in the last resort, a form of the first, since it consists precisely in the training and then the guidance of the muscles by the mind. When a mental operation becomes purely mechanical through repetition it tends to drop from consciousness, or in any event to lose its attractiveness. Those activities, therefore, are in the main alone interesting which involve the attempt to deal with a relatively novel situation.

The pleasures of craftsmanship are due to success in the solution of problems; that is, to the overcoming of obstacles. Our vocation offers us the primary field for the exercise of skill. But games also, in so far as they are not mere games of chance, depend upon it for their interest; and situations arising in the home or in social intercourse may call for it at any moment. In other words, craftsmanship may and ought to permeate every department of individual and social life.

The joys of craftsmanship have their source in the consciousness of power. There are forms of the pursuit of power that are ignoble because they aim at pleasure in the weakness, that is to say the humiliation of others. Games are saved from inclusion in this category because the stakes are insignificant. The struggle for victory in the economic field, on the other hand, is freed from condemnation in so far as it consists in the attempt to serve the public more satisfactorily than one's competitors. Apart from these and other parallel exceptions, the aim to make other men feel your power over them or your superiority to them is unworthy of a gentlemen. But craftsmanship need look to no such end. The immediate aim of the merchant is to discover what people will wish to buy, and then to procure it. The lawyer seeks, through the analysis of a vast mass of complicated and often conflicting data, to predict what will be the decision of a judge when passing upon a given situation. The engineer's successes consist in moulding to his will obstinate material objects

such as steel and concrete. The physician is engaged in fighting disease. The writer attempts to embody significant and interesting ideas in clear and vigorous language. Whatever the ulterior ends in view, the immediate personal satisfaction in these and similar activities has its source not in the humiliation of fellow-beings but in the accomplishment of a definite task. It is precisely because the exercise of craftsmanship does not necessarily involve the consciousness of superiority over others that it is not open to the criticism urged by Paley against the latter as a source of permanent satisfaction.

The pleasures of craftsmanship are not identical with the so-called pleasures of work. In fact, there are no pleasures of work as such. The drudgery of a worker in the Ford factory, who mechanically performs the same monotonous operation all day long, day after day, is not an intrinsic good. It may be less of an evil than chronic idleness, but this fact does not prevent it from being an evil. Some work is in itself a curse, and can only be justified on the ground of the indispensability of its products.[8] Indeed, an age more sensitive to moral values than our own may refuse to play the parasite in permitting itself the enjoyment of goods bought at so high a price, and may elect to live without them until, as in the medieval crafts, creation can be mated with joy.

In the face, then, of a great deal of indiscriminate praise of work, I must insist in the first place that work has no intrinsic value except as it involves craftsmanship, or the exercise of intellectual power. But other conditions are also essential. It must not be continued beyond a point where it becomes monotonous. Again, subject to a limitation which will be considered later, it must not seriously overtax our physical powers.

> "God give me hills to climb
> And strength for climbing."

sings Arthur Guiterman. Furthermore, the joy of craftsmanship is tremendously enhanced when we can work in a medium which we love for its own sake, like the painter who delights in the

[8] See the vivid description of the working day of a casual laborer in Walter Wyckoff's *The Workers: The East*, p. 39, ff.

visible aspects of nature; the engineer who is fascinated by all machinery, including that which he is not called upon to handle; the physician who finds in the structure and working of the human body a source of inexhaustible wonder; the man of affairs, the born manager of men, who has an immediate interest in human nature as such.

Finally the full measure of satisfaction, I am convinced, is reserved for those who are interested not merely in the processes as processes and the materials with which and upon which they work as materials, but who have in addition a deep and abiding interest in the results attained by their efforts. The prosecution of one's vocation may be intrinsically interesting to a man whose wealth renders him financially independent of monetary returns. But it has a distinctly deeper significance, I can not but believe, to him who, in addition, finds in it the means of livelihood for himself and family. For a similar reason the physician or the business man who wants to serve his patients or his customers not merely for his own sake but for theirs also, and who is successful in doing so, feels a deep and strong satisfaction at his success which fuses with his delight in his skill and his interest in the materials with which he works, and thus produces a whole incomparably richer than that which could ever be derived from the mere exercise of intellect as a sport.

Thus if there is no joy in achievement, whether because the product does not warrant it or because of the indifference of the agent, something precious will be lost. Hume has called attention to this fact in his characteristically concrete fashion.

"'Tis evident that the pleasure of hunting consists in the action of the mind and body; the motion, the attention, the difficulty, and the uncertainty. 'Tis evident likewise that these actions must be attended with an idea of utility in order to their having any effect upon us. A man of the greatest fortune, and the farthest remov'd from avarice, tho' he takes a pleasure in hunting after partridges and pheasants, feels no satisfaction in shooting crows and magpies; and that because he considers the first as fit for the table, and the other as entirely useless. Here 'tis certain that the utility or importance of itself causes no real passion, but is only requisite to support the imagination; and the same person who overlooks a ten times greater profit in any other

subject is pleas'd to bring home half a dozen woodcocks or plovers, after having employ'd several hours in hunting after them."[9]

Dostoevsky writes:

"I have sometimes thought that the way to crush and annihilate a human being completely would be to set him to do an absolutely senseless and useless thing. If he were condemned to pour water from one tub into another and then back again, or to pound sand in a mortar, or to carry a heap of earth backward and forward, I am convinced that he would either commit suicide within a few days or murder some of his fellow sufferers in order to suffer death at once and be delivered from this moral torture, shame, and degradation."[10]

We act normally to achieve a certain result, and indifference to this result tends to throw its shadow over the entire process by which it is attained.

I should not have mentioned facts so obvious if it were not the fashion in certain quarters to ignore them. This is done whenever it is said that the good is to be found not in the results, but solely in the getting of results; that it consists in activity as such. This conclusion is not infrequently reached by calling everything that is regarded as valuable an activity, whether it be the affection with which a mother looks down upon her sleeping child or the enjoyment of a sunset. Each of these experiences of course does involve activity; so does looking at a hideous smoke-begrimed factory which you happen to be passing. But however anyone may think to solve the problems of ethics by playing fast and loose with language, the fundamental objection to this indiscriminate glorification of activity as an end in itself is found in the fact that activity does not appeal to the layman as intrinsically desirable except under the conditions, not inconsiderable in number, which have here been enumerated.

Power consists in the removal or destruction of opposing forces. The amount of the success is thus measured by the strength of the opposition. Accordingly the great prizes in this field can be secured only at a great price. Moreover the overwhelming importance of craftsmanship in the world of values means that effort

[9] *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book III, Pt. III, sec. X
[10] *The House of the Dead*, Ch. II.

and struggle are forever necessary elements in any life which is really worth while. Those who go to the summit of a mountain only when it can be reached by automobile will never feel the exhilaration of the climb up the cliffs. Those who sail their boats over an eternally summer sea will never know what it means to master a storm. Furthermore, if the clash of power with power is an essential element in the pursuit of the best, we must accept anxiety, disappointment, failure and loss as its inevitable companions, for only a child cares for a game in which he is sure to win. This does not mean that failure and its associates are good. It means that without them certain goods are unattainable on any large scale. In its struggle to create a better world, civilization, it would seem, should aim to confine these evils within the limits requisite for the attainment and preservation of the corresponding goods. But unfortunately it is almost impossible to locate these limits. And if we knew where they were, had the power to go further, and restrained ourselves only that there might be something left to fight, should we under such circumstances really care for the fight? Seventy-five years ago practically no Mississippi steamer lived through more than two seasons. Within that time she either lay a wreck in some tortuous channel that had choked up over night, or had been destroyed by the sparks that were ever escaping from the pine knots blazing in her furnace. Today almost any man, after a proper apprenticeship, could steer a boat safely from St. Paul to New Orleans, and the pilots of the fifties, immortalized by Mark Twain in his *Life on the Mississippi,* have gone forever. The old ways have given place to the new because we have tamed the wayward, unruly river and exchanged one type of furnace for another. Could we have done otherwise? No, for a good fight must be a real fight, not a stage combat. We are therefore doomed to remove evil where we can, knowing that the act of removing it may be one of the best experiences open to man, so that each success makes life just so much the poorer. If we are lovers of the human race we must therefore hope that new evils will threaten future generations in order that our descendants may have enemies worthy of their steel.

In certain labor circles the tendency is apparently strong to

seek the joys of craftsmanship not in the exercise of one's vocation but solely in play. Here alone, it is sometimes said, man really lives. This view of life seems to me equally false with that which would banish struggle and effort. For play can never form the *pièce de résistance* at the banquet of life; the dessert can never replace the meat course. For apart from many obvious considerations the player, as contrasted with the worker, can never taste the joys of achievement because of the triviality of the results.

There is in my opinion no chance for a completely happy life except as a man loves his work. But there are forms of work which no human being can love. They present a problem of the same order, although not, I hope, of the same magnitude as that of negro slavery in the United States three generations ago. On the other hand, I am convinced from what the men most vitally concerned have themselves told me that a vigorous mind, more eager to get the best out of life than to pose as a martyr, can find something of interest in almost every form of work in which he possesses the powers requisite for the attainment of a fair amount of success.

I once rode for a few hours on a train in company with a locomotive fireman. Although forty-five years of age, he had never attained the dignity of "sitting on the right-hand side of the cab." It might therefore be supposed that he would be indifferent and soured. Quite the contrary; he exhibited great enthusiasm about the workings of the mighty machine which he served and the skill involved in keeping the fire just hot enough and not too hot to make the steam gauge register the proper pressure in the boiler. "You enjoy your work, then," I said. We had both been slouching upon rather uncomfortable seats. At my question my companion straightened up, raised his head, and looking me squarely in the eye replied: "Ah, when I put my foot on the 'gangway' I am a new man." "Blessed is he who has found his work." If so, this fireman had found blessedness and had found it in machinery.[11]

Bookkeeping is regarded by the majority of those engaged in

[11] *Cf.* the interesting sketch of Michael Reynolds in Parton's *Captains of Industry,* Series I, p. 36.

it as one of the most uninteresting and monotonous of occupations. But a writer in *The World's Work* [12] shows that this attitude is by no means necessitated by the nature of the work. Among other things he says: "The ideal bookkeeper sees the meaning of the figures he sets down, sees the relation between his totals and the business—is, in short, a thinking human being." I know a bookkeeper who takes just this kind of interest in his work. He says he would be glad, from sheer delight in his work itself, to keep the books of the great business house with which he is connected, without any compensation, if he could afford it and if that were the only condition upon which he was allowed to do it.

The man who, whether through indifference or greed, allows his craft to become a trade, that is to say a mere means of getting money, will be visited by one of the most terrible of penalties; and the penalty is inevitable. He will lose his joy in craftsmanship and his pride in service, and become a mere money maker. And such a man, whatever his wealth, is for the eight or ten hours of every working day not a free man but a slave.

## Knowledge

Among the intrinsic values of human life the satisfaction of the desire for knowledge for its own sake is one of the most important. This statement will seem self-evident to some persons, preposterous to others. The latter may be reminded that, properly speaking, there is no such thing as love of knowledge, but rather, if I may be permitted the term, loves of knowledges. The knowledge desired may be the size of my neighbor's income, this afternoon's baseball scores, the real causes of the World War, or the structure of the atom. Of such desires there is an almost infinite variety; and that, the acquisition of which thrills one man, may leave another absolutely cold. But everyone, whether low or high in the intellectual scale, cares for some of these things. And if our favorite items of knowledge were blotted from our minds, never to return, or if access to the accustomed fields were barred, or if we should lose all interest in them so that we

[12] Vol. 10, p. 6324.

wished neither to think, nor talk, nor hear, nor read about them, we should quickly discover ourselves to be impoverished indeed.

The differences between persons' intellectual interests are doubtless in part an ultimate fact, behind which it is impossible to go. But many of them are mere consequences of the principle that we can have no curiosity about that of which we know absolutely nothing. More than this, curiosity, I think, keeps always just one step ahead of knowledge, so that as the latter increases in breadth, and depth, and height, curiosity increases also. Here, emphatically, the appetite grows with eating. The continuous, systematic pursuit of knowledge is accordingly apt to find its initial motive in something else than desire for the knowledge for its own sake. This motive may be the need of it for purposes of earning a living or the attainment of some other external end. Or it may be aroused by knowledge in some neighboring field. Most rarely of all, I suppose, the incentive may come from the prevision of the joys of knowledge and a determination to possess them, strong enough to impel the learner to take the earlier steps in acquisition, which are often so irksome.

Progress in attainment is normally accompanied by growing interest. Where this is not the case the explanation may lie in intellectual powers inadequate to the task. But more frequently, I think, it is due to that hypertrophied shrinking from effort which curses human life and robs mankind of so many of its best joys. You cannot get something for nothing. And almost every good thing in life must be won, not by the sword—else were there aspirants innumerable—but by the plowshare. Thus men who happen to have no premonitory intuition of the value of what they miss, refuse to pay the price which stern Nature seldom fails to exact. And then they complain that life is dull.

From these facts we are justified in concluding, I believe, that the love of knowledge is a very important factor in the life of every man; and that if it does not occupy larger spaces in the topography of thought, if it does not extend itself over a wider variety of subjects, this is due largely to what we may call relatively accidental or superficial circumstances. These barriers a more enlightened system of education, in which the student himself coöperates by the use of some other faculty besides memory,

should to a large extent succeed in removing. Knowledge, in other words, is capable of becoming a leading item in the inner resources of most men.

Knowledge may be either shallow or deep. The former kind consists in isolated facts; the latter is of universal propositions, or of generalizations, narrow or broad. "General observations drawn from particulars," writes John Locke, "are the jewels of knowledge, comprehending great store in a little room." A "general observation" is in itself normally more interesting than a "particular," provided that it is actually understood, and not merely understood but also grasped in the fulness of its content by the mind. Grasp is made possible by the imagination fastening itself upon some concrete illustration of the rule, and holding the picture in the richness of its original coloring and the completeness of its form before the mind. Under such conditions what we really have is not a generalization alone, or a particular alone, but the latter seen in the light of the former. The universal viewed from such an angle grips us more effectively than the particular, first because it embodies not one item but countless thousands. More important, however, is the fact that it includes within its compass relationships as well as terms, and the apprehension by the intellect of a system of relationships is one of the highest delights which human life has to offer. This privilege is open in an exceptional degree to the student of science. For here more abundantly than elsewhere masses of individual units are brought together in one generalization; then groups of such generalizations are bound together to form a universal principle of a still higher order; and this process may continue until the borders of the universe seem almost within reach. In such an ascent seeming confusion is replaced by order, anarchy by the reign of law, chance by a beautiful necessity, dead fact by reason. In moments of such insight we stand upon the summit of a mountain and view the hitherto separated parts of nature as one vast, interrelated whole. Everything that is small and trivial within us falls away; and the mind expands to admit the great world.

Thus while all knowledge is *per se* a good for him to whom it appeals, those who are acquainted with all its forms agree

that the deepest is the best. This is not solely because it grants its votaries the beatific vision. It bears other gifts in its hands also. It offers the most complete immunity we possess against the dulling effects of repetition which permeate every department of life, and for which "we know no remedy." This may be because the universal is always turning a new facet towards us, so that novelty is always keeping satiety at a distance. But whatever the explanation the fact is beyond doubt. The deeper truths, furthermore, enjoy a distinction even more precious than their eternal youth. They usher us, as no others can, into the presence of the world's underlying mystery.

The sense of mystery is one of the most tremendous, as it is one of the most chastening and purifying experiences of human life. But there can be no consciousness of mystery, no recognition of the limitations of knowledge and no yearning desire to pierce the darkness which lies beyond, no feeling of the sublime in the presence of the great abyss, without some knowledge of that which lies this side of the barriers. For centuries man has talked of the mystery of the stars. But no one has felt it in its fulness who has not known at least that the stars are suns, and that the great globe from which we derive heat and light, and with them life, is a body utterly different in its principles of construction from the solid earth to which it ministers. As knowledge about the stellar universe increases, the mystery of those enormous centers of force, their origin, their history, the source of their continued life, their ultimate fate, the nature and significance of the vast and empty reaches of space that lie between them, presses more and more upon our minds. Only he who knows, knows what it is not to know. And although knowledge of our ignorance is depressing in so far as it forces upon us the consciousness of our impotence, it is also inspiring as a witness to the magnificence and majesty of that universe of which we form a part.

These deeper levels of knowledge are accessible to all who have eyes to see and intelligence to think. Such a statement may sound like sentimentality, but as I intend it, it is literally true. There are unquestionably some departments of knowledge, such as modern physics, where the profoundest insights are open only

to those who are masters of a difficult technique like the higher mathematics. But there is other knowledge besides that of the ultimate constitution of matter, knowledge which to some persons will always seem more warm, more homelike, and thus more attractive. Our knowledge of human nature and human society may start from the things we have directly learned by living. The villager may raise his knowledge of the community gossip to the dignity of a treatise on human nature, and many a shrewd and quite unlettered man or woman has succeeded in doing so. After all, every statement about an isolated fact may be called gossip. And all gossip may be transfigured as it gives birth to general ideas. Once more, a business man is in the very nature of the case the center of a network of relationships extending from his office, his shop, or his factory to the ends of the earth. Every change in demand and supply, every new mode of organizing the economic forces of which his activity is a unit, every shift in the distribution of wealth, every rise and fall in the efficiency of workers, is the product of some waxing or waning of human wants, some new insight or some older insight recovered, some happy or unhappy leap of the imagination, some tightening or relaxation of effort somewhere. Today's economic system is not that of a generation ago; it is not that which will be a generation hence. All is perpetual motion, as in the cells that form the brain. How came it to be thus, whither is it tending, what is it today? These questions, first asked in their concretest form, for example concerning my own factory, its raw materials, its financial foundations, its workers, and its products, then of the factories of my competitors perhaps in distant cities, then of those of my neighbors; these questions leading to others and those to still others;—right here are the materials for the deeper insight; here is the opportunity for the business man to feel the glow and share the spirit of free adventure which makes the life of the student of science, history, and philosophy what they are, a thing precious beyond all that the world's wealth can buy.

As life goes on the student—the student as a man of business just as truly as the professional man of science,—keeps discovering not merely new facts, but also ever new relationships, relationships within the little systems which form the starting point,

and relationships between the systems. Thus each year sees him richer in intellectual possessions, and he finds that in the intellectual as in the economic world wealth begets wealth. Every gain, every advance, makes the next one easier. For if "no one can learn that which he has no preparation for learning," everyone can learn that for which he has the preparation. More than this, with each acquisition the older possessions grow in significance almost in geometric ratio. For this reason advancing life instead of becoming continuously more dull and drab as it does for most persons, grows more and more absorbing. "I always thought of old age as a much pleasanter period of life than the earlier years," wrote the great scholar Wilhelm von Humboldt. "Now, having reached it, my expectations are almost surpassed." [13] Every serious undergraduate discovers this principle at work as he passes from his freshman to and through his senior year.

All knowledge, as I have said, whether it be deep or superficial, has a value of its own to him who cares for it. But it does much else for us besides satisfying the hunger of the mind. For one thing it takes us out of ourselves. Certainly we need periodical vacations from self, even if for no other reason than that we may return to the familiar scene with new zest. Self after all is too narrow a cage for the human soul. It does not give us space to spread our wings. But outside the cage is the great world where we may roam at will. When misfortune comes, this ability to forget self, to turn our back on our own fate, may prove our salvation.

I cannot refrain from referring to one other matter. "The best of life is conversation," writes Emerson. We need not accept this dictum just as it stands,—and yet, he who has known the joys of really good conversation will recognize that these words point to a very important truth. Compare such an experience with the patter of the woman who can talk of nothing but her children, or that of her husband who has no ideas outside of his business save on the subjects of automobiles and golf. We see at once that good conversation is possible only among students—not necessarily students of books, not necessarily experimenters in a

[13] *Cf.* Payot, *The Education of the Will* (Eng. tr.), pp. 383-385.

laboratory, but students in the larger sense, those who live habitually in the presence of ideas.

To live in the presence of great ideas, not as things remote from life, but rather as an essence penetrating every fiber of life, makes the craftsman as distinguished from the drudge; makes the traveller as distinguished from the rustic; makes the man of broad vision as distinguished from the wretched being who cannot take his eyes from himself.

### Beauty

For those who are sensitive to the appeal of each, beauty ranks as an equal in value to knowledge. If we are not to misunderstand this statement we must remind ourselves, as we did in studying knowledge, that there are many forms of beauty, and that a man who is susceptible to one may be quite blind to the attractions of another. A few people have an inborn love for every manifestation of the beautiful; but there is probably no human being so poor in soul as not to admire some of the creations of man's efforts to embody beauty, or some feature of the lovely garment of nature. Most men care for certain aspects of the material world, even though it be no more than the dappled green of a shaded lawn. The enjoyment of music is perhaps as nearly universal in the race as any trait not strictly requisite for the maintenance of existence. A close competitor for this distinction is the interest in narrative, which is of course to be counted as a variety of the æsthetic experience.

Why men differ in tastes as they do is, as in the parallel case of interest in knowledge, largely unknown. He who discovers the causes of the varied forms of obtuseness will be one of the great benefactors of mankind. While the race is waiting for him we can set down a few stray generalizations which seem quite certain.

Many people have what President Wilson called a single-track mind. This means among other things that they are forever doomed to poverty of emotional life because they cannot follow a number of widely different leads, and therefore are shut out from the concomitant satisfactions. Our ancestors, as pioneers who had come to this new continent to subdue a wilderness, were

men of action rather than of reflection and feeling. To the force of heredity was long added the influence of frontier modes of life. Our frontier, it must be remembered, disappeared officially from the government maps only a little over a generation ago. In view of these facts it is perhaps no wonder that most Americans find their fundamental satisfactions in craftsmanship and the exercise of the affections. The pity of it is that hypertrophy of one function should lead to atrophy of the other; that there should be so little room in the mind by the side of these desirable traits for the disinterested pursuit of knowledge and the enjoyment of beauty. For life is not so rich in content that we can afford to throw away any of its treasures. All of us, and not merely Protestants, as Cardinal Newman would have it, are "anxious tillers of a frugal soil."

In a community of "activists" those who possess some powers of æsthetic appreciation are apt to lose what little they have. "From him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." This is partly because we let fashion dictate what shall be the sources of our pleasure, especially when we have no very strong feelings of our own; partly because there will be relatively little material in such a society for the æsthetic emotions to feed upon. In consequence of these and other factors there enters the most powerful influence of all—the law of atrophy. This law declares: "That which is unexpressed dies." The classical description of the loss of the higher faculties of taste through decay is that which is given by Mr. Darwin of his own experience. It has often been quoted but can hardly be omitted from an analysis like the present. He writes:

"Up to the age of thirty, or beyond it, poetry of many kinds, such as the works of Milton, Gray, Byron, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley, gave me great pleasure, and even as a schoolboy I took intense delight in Shakespeare, especially in the historical plays. I have also said that formerly pictures gave me considerable, and music very great delight. But now for many years I cannot endure to read a line of poetry: I have tried lately to read Shakespeare, and found it so intolerably dull that it nauseated me. I have also almost lost my taste for pictures or music. Music generally sets me thinking too energetically on what I have been at work on, instead of giving me pleasure. I retain some taste for fine scenery, but it does not cause me the exquisite delight which it formerly did. . . .

"This curious and lamentable loss of the higher æsthetic tastes is all the odder, as books on history, biographies, and travels (independently of any scientific facts which they may contain), and essays on all sorts of subjects interest me as much as ever they did. My mind seems to have become a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of large collections of facts, but why this should have caused the atrophy of that part of the brain alone on which the higher tastes depend, I cannot conceive. If I had to live my life again, I would have made a rule to read some poetry and listen to some music at least once every week; for perhaps the parts of my brain now atrophied would thus have been kept active through use. The loss of these tastes is a loss of happiness, and may possibly be injurious to the intellect, and more probably to the moral character by enfeebling the emotional part of our nature." [14]

It is possible to name at least one more cause for the phenomenon we are studying. Beauty, like knowledge, may be either superficial or deep. Much beauty has its source in the perception of relations between harmonious parts; it is due to the apprehension of a pattern. This is very clearly the case in music and architecture. It holds, at bottom, equally for all the arts and also for the beautiful in nature. This pattern may be one which may be grasped by the mind in an instant and without effort; or it may be too complicated for so cheaply bought a mastery. In the latter case its attractions are not apt to be discovered in a community where there is no tradition to force its claims upon the attention, to arouse faith in its value, or to point the way to its attainment. In all music, for example, there are among other things, harmony, rhythm, and usually rhyme. In listening to great music he who has no previous training, or has not been endowed with exceptional powers of appreciation must learn by experience, as best he can, so to handle his attention, his powers of analysis, his memory and whatever other faculties may be involved, as to follow the pattern through the complications which tend to conceal it; and he can do this successfully, in the main, only in so far as he has the opportunity to hear the same composition repeatedly. But in a society which knows nothing of the more complicated forms of music where can he get the necessary incentives or the necessary opportunities?

These considerations and others which the reflective reader will discover for himself lead to the conclusion that æsthetic

[14] *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin*, Vol. I, p. 81.

blindness is not an inevitable limitation of human nature; that many, probably most people, could be educated to a catholic enjoyment of all forms of beauty under certain assignable conditions which might well be realized a long distance this side of Utopia. If so, it is capable of becoming a practically universal element in life. For the stimuli of æsthetic feelings are today accessible to practically every member of a civilized society. Literature began its career as a democratic art with the invention of printing. Painting, sculpture, and architecture were enabled to reveal to a larger public at least some few of their charms, upon the invention of the art of engraving and its successors. The human voice is still the greatest of musical instruments. And everywhere there is nature. We do not have to go to Switzerland or the Mediterranean coast to find its beauties. Wherever we may live nature surrounds us with her perfections, usually on the ground or in the trees just above us; and always, at least, in the sky with its clouds, its mist and haze, its depths of blue, its sunset colors, and by night the stately procession of the stars.

Beauty, accordingly, must not be thought of as something apart from everyday life, as something to be obtained only through a visit to a gallery of paintings. We should and may live in the midst of beauty. First in our homes, for which, if we would but refuse to sell ourselves as slaves to luxury and ostentation, most of us could afford to buy a few really beautiful objects of art—chairs built on graceful lines, good rugs, a bit of pewter, a vase for flowers, an etching and a few photographs for the walls; then in our office or factory; then in so far as our fellow-citizens can be induced to coöperate with us, in our cities; and finally, as is being done in many parts of our country, in the state. Wild nature, books, music—these may be the delight of our leisure hours. But many forms of beauty may be integral parts of the hours we devote to work and to social life.

Our discussion of the value of beauty has raised two questions which must not be confused. First, does beauty rank for those who know it most intimately as one of the best things in life? Second, how widely can the appreciation of beauty be distributed? I return to the first, which is really that with which

we started. There are men and women to whom beauty means so much that they care for little else and still declare life to be worth living. There are more catholic minds who value other goods beside beauty but find in it one of the great fundamental values.

Both of these classes unite, I believe, in declaring that the deeper beauties are more satisfying than the superficial ones. It is the former, chiefly that call into existence those priceless experiences which remain in our memories through life, a joy today after the lapse of years. It is these also that are most resistant to the dulling effects of repetition, which is an even more insidious foe here than it is in the field of knowledge. For it is not true without qualification that a thing of beauty is a joy forever. If this famous aphorism holds for the more hidden features of nature, for a play of Shakespeare or a Wagner opera, it is because they are continuously revealing new aspects when we return to them, so that the treasures which they are capable of yielding are little short of inexhaustible. Finally, it is these deeper experiences that most completely lift us out of ourselves and transport us to the heights where the dull monotony of the commonplace is lost to view and the vision opens on a world moulded nearer to the heart's desire than the shabby reality in which we are too often imprisoned. 'He that seeketh findeth." And beauty has reserved its choicest gifts for those who earnestly and patiently search them out.

### Friendship

The next good which I shall name is friendship. Our friends differ from our acquaintances through the element of intimacy. Acquaintanceship is a good, indeed it is an indispensable element of a satisfactory life, but friendship is something far more precious. Friendship involves affection or love. But it includes something more. A father may feel affection for his year-old son, yet can hardly look upon him as a friend. Friendship involves in addition to love a consciousness of congeniality and delight in companionship because of such congeniality. Friendship may not involve the same intensity of feeling as does parenthood; but a person who does not excite a feeling which

can fairly be called affection or love can hardly be regarded as a friend. Friendship, as I employ the term, is applicable to the relationship between husband and wife, brother and brother, as well as between those who are members of different families.

It is unnecessary to say much about the value of friendship. Everyone has felt loneliness, and most persons regard it, when long continued, as one of the most horrible forms of torture. Everyone knows also that there may be the most intense loneliness in the midst of an abundance of acquaintances. "For a crowd is not company; and faces are but a gallery of pictures; and talk but a tinkling cymbal, where there is no love." [15] You realize that when you turn your back on these people to live elsewhere you will drop out of their lives and the circle of their interests completely and forever. And that whatever may befall you here and now or later they will feel no serious concern for you and your fate; and you, in turn, as little for them.

> "I shall despair. There is no creature loves me:
> And if I die, no soul shall pity me." [16]

Thus speaks the most "hard-boiled" of Shakespeare's villains on the eve of a great crisis in his life. And Shakespeare certainly knew what was in the heart of man. There is thus no other form of association that can take the place of friendship. And he who loses his friends for the sake of a multitude of acquaintances, as many men have done, has made a poor exchange.

Much has been written about the usefulness of friends; most eloquently perhaps by Lord Bacon in his famous essay "Of Friendship"; but as I am dealing with intrinsic, not extrinsic values, I shall here confine myself to the needs which friendship meets directly. Of these the following seems to me the most important.

In a sense we live and must live forever utterly alone. The abyss that separates each man from the rest of the universe can really never be passed. But we can at least stand upon the verge and signal to each other as Earth might signal to Mars; and

[15] Francis Bacon, Essay "Of Friendship."

[16] *Richard III,* Act V, Scene III, 1, 200. *Cf. King Lear,* Act V, Scene III, l. 239: "Yet Edmund was beloved."

the demand of our natures for such communion is imperative. A friend is one who is profoundly interested in those things which most profoundly interest me. And just as he likes best to do the things I like best to do, so does he like to talk about the things about which I most wish to talk. We have, as the phrase is, common interests and can thus pursue them together to our pleasure as well as profit. Among these interests for which my friend cares must be myself, my ambitions, joys, sorrows, successes, failures, hopes, and fears. I do not speak of these things to most persons lest I bore them. But I must have someone to whom I can reveal them. This someone is precisely my friend. My hopes and fears will become his own; my successes he will rejoice in, my failures give him genuine sorrow. And this "redoubleth joys and cutteth griefs in half." More than this, he will approve my ambitions—for precisely this is involved in congeniality of spirit; and he will share my attitude toward human life, for his conceptions of its goods and evils will be fundamentally my own. For this reason I can reveal myself to him without concealment—not merely because he is interested in me but because he will be in sympathy with my ideals, my purposes, and my judgments upon man and his ways. We shrink from any real self-revelation in the presence of most persons because we fear to be met by an ill-concealed yawn, or frown, or sneer, or sardonic smile. The things for which we care most are thus those about which we are compelled to keep silent. And those things about which it is most necessary to keep silent are those about which we most want to speak. My friend is one who makes it possible for me to satisfy this craving.

The basis of friendship is congeniality of tastes and interests. Friends must enjoy doing the same things. Their attitude toward life's problems must be fundamentally the same; at least must be such that they can understand and respect each other's differences. Where one man approves and welcomes that which another condemns, hates, and would if he could annihilate, the fundamental conditions of friendship are obviously lacking. Then they must respect and admire each other, although they need not regard each other as perfect. Much wreckage of happiness in marriage is due to the expectation of perfection in one's mate,

together with the failure to face the question whether one is himself worthy of union with perfection. But because we are not all perfect beings there can be no permanent friendship without perspective, that is to say without recognition of the differences of the gravity of faults, and the ability to place them in the foreground, middle ground, or background of our picture of the friend's personality, as they may deserve. Finally, friendship is an impossibility without unselfishness. But of this I shall speak in another place.[17]

### Self-Realization

"Life is a struggle to think well of ourselves," writes Felix Adler.[18] The longing to think well of ourselves is a source of some of our deepest joys and at the same time of our greatest misfortunes. A not inconsiderable part of the latter is due to our determination to stand well in our own eyes at whatever cost. Therefore when mistakes are made, calamities befall us, estrangements arise, we attribute them wholly to the folly, carelessness, or downright wickedness of others. It is here that we show ourselves, as I have already said, past masters in the art of throwing dust into our eyes. It is here that the will to believe celebrates its most astounding triumphs. Hence come enmities between acquaintances, the break-up of ancient friendships, coldness between those who must live together, suspicion of the whole body of one's fellow-men—a world in which everyone throws all the blame on some one else because he will not see himself as he is. This trait of human nature may make the cynic laugh and the lover of mankind weep. But however we may feel, we may learn from it how deeply rooted in every one of us is the craving for self-respect. The principle at work is that whatever we admire in another we wish, or tend to wish to possess for ourselves. In the modern small boy the model is supplied by the reigning athlete. From this point ambition may expand until, in time, it covers the entire field of human excellence, the ability to use our muscles for the shaping or creating of material objects, intellectual power in all its myriad forms, delicacy and keenness

[17] Chapter XXII, page 469.
[18] *The Standard*, Vol. I, p. 120.

of artistic discrimination and appreciation, refinement of taste, grace and charm of manner, depth of emotional capacity, strength of will, and sensitiveness to the rights of other persons. Any or all of those capabilities may be sought not merely as a means to an end but as an end in itself. And in accordance with the general laws of desire, attainment, or rather each step forward in the direction of attainment, will tend to produce satisfaction. The name which is commonly given to the object of this quest is self-realization.

Among the many forms which the desire for perfection may take, the desire for perfection of character is the most worthy of careful study. But what I have to say on this subject I shall leave for Chapter XXII, where the relation of character to individual happiness will be discussed in a number of its bearings. In that place I shall also consider certain difficulties which arise when personal perfection of any kind is made the goal of systematic endeavor.

### Adventure

The preceding enumeration omits two values which have always played a major rôle in the life of the European race. They are adventure and religion. From a strictly logical point of view they ought not to be classified with their predecessors on our list, because in principle they are included in one or another of them. But they are too important to be passed over in silence.

Adventure, whether it be feats of arms, the exploration of unknown lands, or hazardous activity of any other sort, derives a part of its attractiveness from the appeal of craftsmanship. It satisfies the desire to be conscious of one's own powers. With this is united, however, another factor, the will to expose oneself to the danger of loss, suffering, or death; to gamble with fate. In this experience is found an excitement which to some is the wine of life.

There is little to be gained by discussing the place of the craving for adventure in the modern world because the opportunities for its satisfaction seem doomed to disappear largely or entirely in the course of the years immediately before us. Civilization is apparently its inexorable enemy and will carry away the victory in the end. There is, indeed, adventure in

business—but really only for a few. War is still with us, but the element of adventure has disappeared. If it had not this would make no difference; for either war or civilization must die. The boy reading the *Life of Jesse James* behind the barn is by no means an abnormal figure; on the contrary, he deserves our sympathy. This hunger for excitement, whether in youth or man, is one which the knights of the Round Table might satisfy blamelessly. Doubtless those who lead routine lives have a grossly exaggerated notion of the freedom, sweep, and exhilaration of the career of the seeker for adventure. Nevertheless the closing up of the spaces where this spirit may work and roam is a real evil —one more reminder of the fact that all progress must be paid for and that the price exacted is often high.

### Religion

Religious values can not be discussed without reference to the fact that there are almost as many definitions of religion as there are writers on the subject. To me, however, its essential nature is represented by the words: "Enoch walked with God." At all events it is this "life of God in the soul of man" whose place in the system of goods it is best worth our while to consider. Religion thus conceived means companionship with God. This involves the satisfaction of the craving for love and with it for self-revelation to an understanding, congenial, and sympathetic spirit, free from that admixture of imperfection which is the price of all human intercourse. It offers the opportunity for the exercise of craftsmanship in the prosecution of tasks of infinite significance, with death as nothing other than a door opening to new and more splendid opportunities. And to many minds it brings the complete assurance that everything which is permanently good in one's personal endeavor and everything which is fundamentally legitimate in the purposes of mankind will be saved from ultimate destruction; that the best in life will live forever. With this faith comes a feeling of peace and security, the peace that passeth understanding. For those to whom these things are realities and not mere words, the thin shadows of the experiences of others, religion thus comes to be the supreme realization of all values.

The moralist, however, would be derelict to his duty if he failed to point out the dangers of that form of religion which accepting at the same time the doctrines of the omnipotence and the goodness of God meets the difficulties involved in this conception by asserting that whatever happens represents not merely the best attainable under irremovable conditions perhaps untoward, but the very best conceivable by the mind of Omniscience itself. Those who are driven by a craving for activity which can not be stilled will doubtless continue to fight for their favorite ends whether they hold this creed or not. But the great majority of men, perhaps even most of the knights of the strenuous life, need to be supported in their struggles by the conviction that the world will really be just so much the poorer if they do not play their part. The progress of medicine, for example, would have been all but impossible without the conviction that sickness is a real evil, not a sham or "apparent" one, and that it ought to be driven from the world as a curse to mankind. If among the workers for its destruction there are some who believe that whatever is, including disease, is right, this merely affords one more demonstration of the well-known fact that human beings are capable to an almost inconceivable degree of carrying about with them mutually inconsistent ideas, and, with blissful unconsciousness, following, or supposing themselves to be following both. Happily there are forms of religious devotion which never ask nor expect to receive any such absolute guaranty of success before they will consent to enter the battle, and who realize with Plato that "God, inasmuch as he is good, cannot be the cause of all things." [19]

### The Interpenetration of Values

This brings to an end my survey of the most valuable experiences of life. They are not to be conceived, however, as an agglomeration of unrelated ends. On the contrary, they are to a large extent complementary, so that the value of one is enhanced by the presence of the others. Thus craftsmanship can not yield its best fruits except as it is rooted and grounded in vigorous, abounding health. For this it is which gives action its

[19] *The Republic,* Book II, 379.

zest as well as contributes to its success. The pursuit of our vocation is also most enjoyable, as we have seen, when it deals with materials which we like on their own account. But such materials, it will be remembered, are those which attract us either because they appeal to our desire for knowledge or our love for the beautiful. Wide observation, a good memory, power of analysis and of generalization,—in other words knowledge and wisdom are among the best equipments for friendship. For obviously the richer the personality of the friends the more they will have to give to each other; and the more they have to give the more will they care to be together, and this will mean in the end, the more they will care for each other.

Thus there arises before the mind the picture of a system of interrelated goods each of which reaches its highest expression only through its union with others. At the foundation lies that vigor of body which is the source of good spirits and the unmotived joy of living, on the one hand; and on the other, of the craving for action, for fulness of life, without which other goods are apt to seem but a shadow. The core of the day is occupied with some vocation involving the exercise of powers which are a delight in themselves and which produce results to the agent and those whom they directly serve of such a nature that they add zest to the employment and arouse satisfaction in the retrospect and prospect. In the most favorable circumstances the material with which the vocation deals will in addition satisfy the love of knowledge or of beauty, or even both. Knowledge and beauty will supply some at least of the materials which fill the hours of leisure, and the beautiful will permeate the home and its surroundings. Family and friends will call forth the exercise of the affections and satisfy those subtler needs which only friendship can meet. And the experiences of each passing year will strengthen the determination so to live that one may be able to think ever better of himself. If finally it has been possible to preserve one's religious faith amidst the clamor of contending speculations, then by day and by night, in work and play, in society and solitude, in joy and sorrow, will be felt the presence of the Great Companion, "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

### The Criteria of Valuation

By what criteria, it may be asked, were the goods enumerated in the preceding description selected from the mass of values which life sets before us? I answer, first, it represents what is essentially the consensus of opinion among those who have given serious attention to this subject. But mere authority can not satisfy an active mind and ought not to be allowed to do so. Other evidences are available, however, of a more objective kind. From the rise of Greek ethics with Socrates down to the present day the nature of the good has been a subject of interminable debate. But there are certain characteristics of good which are self-evident, apart from the clashing creeds of rival ethical sects. Examined in the light of these criteria our selection of values will find, I believe, its justification.

In the first place, then, it is wise to seek those goods which depend for their attainment or preservation upon conditions which lie as much as possible within our power to control. While all the goods in our enumeration have their ultimate source in what is given us, as is inevitable in any event, nevertheless a little reflection will show most of them to be within the reach of a vigorous will thoroughly convinced of their value.

In the second place, other things being equal, the more enduring goods are to be chosen rather than the less enduring. The ends which I have set forth as most worthy of pursuit are the only ones which are capable of filling any large proportion of a long series of days. They are those also which can resist most effectively the tendency to become dulled through repetition. They are those which can most easily be preserved in the gallery of memory, and which we should care most to have memory preserve.

Finally, the values which we are considering are the most fruitful, in the sense that they contain a principle of growth which may render each year devoted to their pursuit richer than its predecessor. Money makes money—but only so far as we abstain from using it for purposes of consumption. On the other hand, the more we give ourselves to our friendships the more precious do they become to us. The more we spend the more we

have. The same thing is true of craftsmanship, and the love of knowledge and of beauty. Each gain makes the next one easier and more certain. And with each acquisition the old possessions increase their hold upon our affections.

### Subjectivism in Values

There remains a question of fundamental importance. Are these things which I have declared to be the best elements in life a good for those persons who have no appreciation of them? I answer first, "No." Every form of pleasure or satisfaction is the result of the reaction of an inner susceptibility to a stimulus outside of itself. The ocean, a snow-capped mountain, each may be seen in identical color and form by two persons; to one it may rank as one of the tremendous experiences of life; to the other it may mean no more than a billboard. "We expect great things with no real power to receive them," wrote John Bascom, referring to marriage.[20] Nothing whatever in life can possibly be a good without the power to receive it as a good.

But this statement is not the whole truth. In the first place it is a fact that he who has tastes and interests, in so far as he also has within his power the conditions for gratifying them, is actually so much better off than one who is without them. In the second place, it is probable that everyone who has ordinary intelligence could develop these tastes and interests to a far higher degree than is commonly supposed to be possible. We have seen that the germs of all are to be found in any human being who is not subnormal in intelligence. And many experiences such as the following seem to show that, given a determined will with its concomitant patience, the hidden germs of the higher interests can be quickened into vigorous growth. A certain young man went through college, interested chiefly in the work of the crew, of which in his last year he was captain. After graduating and entering business he became impressed by the fact that there were people who were deriving enjoyment and inspiration from books with famous titles which to him meant nothing. He resolved that their experience should be his also. So he took up the classical English authors and went at the

[20] *Things Learned by Living*, p. 55.

study of them with the same spirit with which he had trained as an oarsman. "I assure you that at first I was terribly bored," he told some of his acquaintances, "but I kept at it until I found what I was looking for." Now the reading of the best literature has become his great passion—an occupation to which he devotes every available moment outside of business hours. Literature was a good for this young man even in the days of his ignorance, in a perfectly definite and extremely important sense of the word good.

### The Relation of the Inner and Outer Factors of Happiness

The principle that the enjoyment of good involves an inner capacity as well as something to which it responds is of universal application, holding equally for the most passing insignificant pleasure—as that of food in the mouth—to the great values of human life. This fact makes it possible for us to assess the rôle of wealth in the field of values. Anyone at all familiar with the world about him knows that wealth, which we sometimes stupidly say enables us to get "everything we want," frequently turns out a cruel disappointment as a gateway to happiness. The reason will be found written upon every page of this Chapter. With most of the greater goods wealth has little or nothing to do one way or the other. Where it is useful in supplying the external factors, as in travel, it can accomplish nothing for its possessor except as the inner capacity is there also. Robert Louis Stevenson knew at first hand wealth, poverty, and that middle state which is neither poverty nor riches. This is what he thought about wealth:

"Money is only a means; it presupposes a man to use it. The rich can go where he pleases, but perhaps please himself nowhere. He can buy a library or visit the whole world, but perhaps he has neither patience to read nor intelligence to see. The table may be loaded and the appetite wanting; the purse may be full and the heart empty. He may have gained the world and lost himself; and with all his wealth around him, in a great house and spacious and beautiful demesne, he may live as blank a life as any tattered ditcher. Without an appetite, without an aspiration, void of appreciation, bankrupt of desire and hope, there, in his great house, let him sit and look upon his fingers. It is perhaps a more fortunate destiny to have a taste for collecting shells than to be born a millionaire. Although neither is to be despised

it is always better policy to learn an interest than to make a thousand pounds; for the money will soon be spent, or perhaps you may feel no joy in spending it; but the interest remains imperishable and ever new. To become a botanist, a geologist, a social philosopher, an antiquary, or an artist, is to enlarge one's possessions in the universe by an incalculably higher degree, and by a far surer sort of property, than to purchase a farm of many acres. You had perhaps two thousand a year before the transaction; perhaps you have two thousand five hundred after it. That represents your gain in the one case. But in the other, you have thrown down a barrier which concealed significance and beauty. The blind man has learned to see. . . . To be, not to possess—that is the problem of life. To be wealthy, a rich nature is the first requisite and money but the second."[21]

A rich nature, then, is the central condition of individual happiness, and—such are the fundamental harmonies of social existence—perhaps the best gift which it is in our power to offer the world.

[21] "Lay Sermons," in *Collected Works*, Pentland Edition, Vol. XV, p. 454.

## Chapter XIX

# THE NATURE OF THE GOOD

The preceding Chapter tried to show that certain experiences or certain elements of life are good. It did not maintain that these were the only elements at which the human will might wisely aim, but only that they were the most important ones. Such a treatment of the subject suggests certain questions of great theoretical if not practical importance and leaves them unanswered. They are: (1) What is the content of our standard of good, *i.e.*, what must be the nature of anything whatever if it is properly to be called good; or what is the common nature of all good things? (2) What is the meaning of the term *good?* To these problems we shall now turn our attention. As before, our inquiry concerns itself solely with intrinsic goodness.

### Early Hedonism

Very simple answers were given to these two questions in the early history of ethics, answers which, if satisfactory, would have made our quest really too easy to be interesting. They are (1) the *good* means the desired. "Whatsoever is the object of any man's appetite or desire, this is it which he for his part calleth good," writes Thomas Hobbes.[1] (2) All desire is for pleasure, and for nothing else. Hence the varied experiences of life are worth having in proportion to their pleasurableness; and they are bad in so far, and only in so far as they are painful, or as the modern psychologist would say, "displeasurable." This view is called Hedonism, from the Greek word *hēdōnē*, meaning pleasure.

The controversy about the good is one long series of misunderstandings. In the hope of helping to eliminate at least one of them, I shall begin by considering what is meant by pleasure and displeasure. Pleasure and displeasure (pain) are ultimate

[1] *Leviathan*, 1651, Ch. VI.

elements of consciousness and therefore are as undefinable as the sensation red. They are never found alone, but always fused with some sensation, or some group of sensations disposed in a particular pattern, or some emotion. To most of us the display of color in the rainbow or in a garden of flowers is pleasurable; so are certain combinations of tones, so are the odor of a rose and the taste of sugar, and a great deal else beside. Here the pleasure is fused with a sensation or group of sensations. Many emotions are highly pleasurable also, notably affection or love, joy, the emotion of the ludicrous, and the emotion of the sublime. The attainment of a desired end is usually (by no means always) followed by a pleasurable experience which may be called the pleasure of fruition. It is in reality the emotion of satisfaction. This emotion, it may be remarked, is either identical with joy (being simply its less intense form), or is at any rate very intimately related with it. It should go without saying that in so far as any of these experiences can be called up by memory so that we see in the mind's eye the flower garden, or hear in the mind's ear the melody, they will tend to be accompanied by pleasure also. If we call these copies of past experiences images, we may summarize by saying that pleasure never appears alone in consciousness, but always fused with sensations, sensation patterns, images, or emotions.

What is true of pleasure is true of displeasure. It is found in some tastes and odors, in the sensations of nausea and the intimately related "feeling" of disgust, in a few combinations of sound, and in a very few color "patterns." One of its most frequent occurrences is in connection with what the psychologists now call "pain sensation." This sensation is obtained in its purest form perhaps when we prick or cut the finger. In very low intensities pain sensations are not displeasurable, or at least not markedly so. But in their most intense forms they constitute some of the most horrible experiences of which we can become the victim. Many emotions are displeasurable; sorrow always, and fear, anger, and hatred ordinarily. "The pain of disappointment" is the displeasurable dissatisfaction which normally attends the failure of a desire to attain its end. It is either identical with, or intimately related to sorrow. Like pleasure, displeasure

never appears alone but always fused with some sensation, sensation pattern, emotion, or occasionally an image.[2]

### The Evidence Against the Earlier Hedonism

The fundamental and fatal objection against the more primitive form of Hedonism is that, as a matter of fact, much desire is aroused by other things than the anticipation of pleasure. Crucial instances are supplied by the desire whose object is some state that will come into existence only after one's death. Thus in an article in *The Forum* [3] Jacob Riis writes that many of the bitterly poor in New York will scrape and save from their pitiful earnings, subjecting themselves to all sorts of privations and positive sufferings, in order that they may get enough money together to be able to pay for a grave of their own and thus escape burial in the Potter's Field. Akin to this desire is that for posthumous fame. This latter desire is not aroused by the prospect of my feeling pleasure after my death because people are praising me. For one thing, this motive has been a master-spring of action in men who, like Julius Cæsar, did not believe in the existence of a world beyond the grave. And it will hardly be argued that those who hold the Christian doctrine of immortality are moved by the picture of themselves as seated on some golden throne in a state of delicious intoxication as the words of praise ascend like sweet incense from earth to sky. Nor will anyone have the hardihood to maintain that the men and women who starve and shiver in order to be able to buy a burial place are thinking of the pleasure they will one day feel lying in their coffins and saying to themselves, "What joy, this land belongs to me!" No! Such instances as these show unmistakably that volition may be directed to the bringing into existence of a certain situation or "state of things" whose arrival promises no pleasure, but which attracts the will none the less.

[2] Sorrow is always displeasurable in itself. But the recollection of a sad event in one's life may, under certain circumstances, be pleasurable. Moreover such is the complexity of the human mind that some persons under certain conditions can find a kind of satisfaction in contemplating their own woes, especially those due to the actions of other people. These are the joys of self-pity—the symptoms of a very dangerous disease.

[3] December, 1892, p. 493.

It is true that when desires of this kind attain their end, the pleasurable emotion of satisfaction (if one is alive to feel it) ordinarily, *though not always,* arises in consciousness. But the expectation of experiencing this emotion was not the stimulus that evoked the desire. For as we saw in Chapter V, page 75, a desire can not be created by the thought of the satisfaction which we should feel if we had it. On the contrary, if the satisfaction of fulfilled desire is to be obtained, the desire whose fulfilment gives rise to the satisfaction must have first been in existence. And if there is attainment without desire, as where a man becomes famous who, like George Washington, cares nothing for fame, no satisfaction whatever will result.

Desires whose objects are something other than pleasure may be called anhedonic desires. They include some of the dominant springs of human action. Among them are the desire for the good opinion of others, the desire for perfection or excellence (or for the good opinion of self), the desire for power, the desire for knowledge, and the desire to communicate our knowledge to others. The desire for the good opinion of our fellow-men includes, of course, the desire for fame, whether posthumous or otherwise; the desire for power includes interest in the exercise of craftsmanship; the desire to communicate is in itself something quite other than the desire to make a favorable impression on others, or to talk about oneself or one's children, or to do a service to a friend. Your room-mate, for example, sits reading the evening paper in the room where you are studying. He knows perfectly well that you detest interruptions; yet he may break into your work half a dozen times to read you some sentence or paragraph which happens to interest him.

What was shown to be true of knowledge in the preceding Chapter applies to all the other anhedonic desires. Each of the classes just enumerated represents a genus comprising a very large number of species. Thus the desire for the good opinion of others may take the form of the wish to appear well dressed to the strangers one passes on the city streets; or to one's friends; or to one's rivals in the business of making a fashion plate of oneself. Or one may be indifferent about clothes and care rather to be known as a skilful rider, a good judge of etch-

ings, or a successful business or professional man. And one may crave the approval of an intimate circle, or the "fit few," or the multitude of the living, or the living and their great-grandchildren.

### Examination of the Assertion That Pleasure Is Never an Object of Desire

From the now universally accepted position that desire may be aroused by the prospect of other things than pleasure, certain writers have rushed to the other extreme and maintained that desire is never for pleasure. Still defining good as the object of desire they have concluded that pleasure forms no part of the content of good. It may indeed accompany the good, as noise attends the motion of an automobile; but it is a mere by-product; and according to the consistent advocates of this view its presence enriches the good precisely as much as noise pushes an automobile.

It will be obvious, however, to a mind interested primarily not in simplification at any cost, but in seeing things as they are, that as power or knowledge can be an end in itself, so can pleasure. I may desire coffee with my dinner rather than water, not because water would slake my thirst less effectively, but because I find the taste or the effects of coffee agreeable. Where the taste does not prove to be such, as unfortunately often happens, I no longer care for it. I have flowers on my table because the sight of them gives me pleasure; and when they cease to please by fading, I remove them. I go to a concert or a play in so far as I expect to enjoy it, and if I enjoy it enough I may desire to go again. I walk to see a sunset for the same reason, and furnish my house as far as I can afford to on the same principle.

As pleasure may be an object of desire so displeasure may be an object of aversion. It is difficult to know what to say on this subject. Those writers who deny that pleasure and displeasure are ever the direct object of desire and aversion are bound to maintain that every human being is perfectly indifferent to displeasure as such. Yet the attempt to prove the opposite involves the setting down of such deadly commonplaces

that one is ashamed to put the words to paper. If displeasure is not an object of aversion why do people take an anæsthetic when about to undergo an operation? Why does Cassandra beg for a painless death?

> "Grant me one boon, a swift and mortal stroke
> That all unwrung by pain, with ebbing blood
> Shed forth in quiet death I close my eyes."[4]

One writer opines that this attitude is to be explained by the existence of a special aversion from pain sensation (in the psychological meaning of this term) as such. But I may also feel a direct aversion for a very bitter or sour taste, a foul odor, a discordant combination of colors, a harsh sound, the very unpleasant state of being bored, or the prospect of any kind of emotional misery. There is, in fact, a great variety of sensorial and emotional experiences which have just this one element in common, namely, the presence of displeasure. These, when anticipated, we shrink from or try to avoid; when present we attempt to throw off; and when they are removed we rejoice. Since these elements have just one common factor, namely displeasure, we are justified in inferring that it is the source of our aversion.

## The Content of the Good: An Autobiographical Sketch

We find ourselves, I believe, in possession of the following results. If good be defined simply as that which is the object of desire, the good must consist in a miscellaneous lot of items, possessing no common characteristic, for which therefore no general formula can be found, and constantly in conflict with each other in that the attainment of one will often involve the loss of another. This conclusion is actually accepted as the last word on the subject by many contemporary moralists. Before we admit, however, that so chaotic a situation represents our best insight into the matter, let us see if we can not push our analysis a step farther.

A not inconsiderable part of the literature on this subject appears to me to be essentially autobiographical in nature. It

[4] Æschylus, *Agamemnon;* translated by E. D. A. Morshead, *The House of Atreus,* p. 59.

is couched, to be sure, in general terms, but the writer, as a matter of fact, seems to have his eyes only on himself. I shall avail myself of the same privilege and shall accordingly start from an account of certain personal attitudes of my own.

1. I find, then, that for me my good must consist in some state of my own consciousness. Nothing appeals to me as a good *for me* except as it forms or promises to form a part of my own experience. In his *Principia Ethica,* Mr. G. E. Moore asks his readers to try the following experiment:

"Let us imagine one world exceedingly beautiful. Imagine it as beautiful as you can; put into it whatever on this earth you most admire—mountains, rivers, the sea, trees and sunsets, stars and moon. Imagine these all combined in the most exquisite proportion so that no one thing jars against another, but each contributes to increase the beauty of the whole. And then imagine the ugliest world you can possibly conceive. Imagine it just one heap of filth, containing everything that is most disgusting to you for whatever reason, and the whole, as far as may be, without one redeeming feature . . . [Now imagine that not] any human being ever has or ever by any possibility can live in either, can see and enjoy the beauty of the one and hate the foulness of the other . . . Supposing them quite apart from the contemplation of human beings; still is it irrational to hold that it is better that the beautiful world should exist than the one which is ugly? Would it not be well in any case to do what we could to produce it rather than the other?"[5]

To this challenge my mind has never made any other than a single response. Provided Mr. Moore's question is understood as he intends it—a matter considered in the following Section—my reply is definitely that I should not turn my hand over to bring it into existence. On precisely the same grounds, while some stirrings of desire about the disposition of my body and about my reputation with others after my death may undoubtedly make themselves felt now and then, reflection brings to me the conviction that if I am to be unconscious of these things they can not possibly constitute my good at that time. Of course my present belief that I will have a grave of my own, that others will speak well of me after I have gone away from them for-

[5] *Principia Ethica,* p. 83.

ever may give me a present satisfaction and thus constitute a present good. But that is not the problem under discussion. This is: Will the attainment of that be a good for me of the existence of which, when it comes, I shall have no consciousness? To this my mind answers without hesitation: "No." Here then is a case where the desired and the good, for me, part company. I feel the desire (somewhat mildly) but recognize the end as not constituting any part of what I am willing on reflection to call my good. Similarly I should not regard the fame of Julius Cæsar as constituting any part of his good today, provided he is today unconscious of its existence.

2. At the age of twenty-seven, Professor Thomas H. Huxley received the greatest honor which it is in the power of the representatives of British science to confer, the gold medal of the Royal Society. In a letter to his fiancée, written immediately thereupon, after informing her of the fact, he adds these words:

"And now shall I be very naughty and make a confession? The thing that a fortnight ago (before I got it) I thought so much of, I give you my word I do not care a pin for. I am sick of it and ashamed of having thought so much of it, and the congratulations I get give me a sort of internal sardonic grin."[6]

If this means that the obtaining of a long and intensely desired object yielded him no satisfaction (unfortunately a not altogether rare occurrence), then I should say that its possession was for him not an intrinsic good. The obtaining of a desired end, without a feeling of satisfaction upon attainment, appeals to me as an experience absolutely barren of value.

3. An older student was comforting a younger friend for the failure of the latter to be elected to a society supposed to be made up of those who had distinguished themselves in the "outside activities" incident to the life of the institution. He said: "For the first two days after my election (the year before) I was tickled pink. After that I never cared anything about it." He was trying to make the boy feel that the honor had had a forty-eight hours value and nothing more, because after that time the satisfaction of attainment had ceased. I should agree

[6] *Life and Letters of Thomas H. Huxley*, Vol. I, p. 110.

with the student on his presentation of the facts. I too should say that when the satisfaction of attainment has evaporated the intrinsic value has disappeared, although that which was once so ardently desired (here membership in a society) continues to exist as before.

From "1," "2," and "3" I draw this conclusion, which, as far as I can see, is true at any rate of myself. Mere attainment of a desired end does not constitute a good. If I am to regard it as intrinsically valuable, attainment must bring satisfaction, and (except as memory from time to time reinstates the picture of the faded glow) the value lasts only as long as the satisfaction endures.

4. I feel myself compelled to go a step farther. As far as I can determine, my estimate of the amount of value rises and falls with my estimate of the amount of the satisfaction which the attainment of a desired end will produce. When Abraham Lincoln, after stepping aside several times, in his unselfish fashion, to make way for another candidate for office, was finally nominated and elected as a representative in Congress, he said: "My election did not afford me anything like so much satisfaction as I thought it would." In so far as this statement was true, I should say the intrinsic value of the position to him (that is to say, apart from any possible effects it might have in the way of political position, or financial advancement, or of education in citizenship or knowledge of the world), was just so much nearer to the zero point.

5. Many forms of pleasure may arise in consciousness without the intervention of any desire whatever. This is true of certain sense pleasures; for example, that of odor. It is true of all or certainly most æsthetic pleasures. A bank of flowers may thrust itself upon the view, a strain of music make itself heard without any previous warning and without any "hunger" whatever for it. Its pleasurableness is not, like the consciousness of power or the acquisition of knowledge, due to the fact that now I am in possession of something of which I had previously been feeling the want. It is true that such a state *may* at times accompany the æsthetic pleasures. But the enjoyment of beauty is one thing,

the satisfaction which may arise in consequence of an attained desire for a repetition of previous enjoyments is quite another. Now to me, at least, the enjoyment which has no causal connection with desire appeals as a good just as unequivocally as does the enjoyment which is the creation of a satisfied desire. And it appeals to me as a good regardless of whether there is by its side in consciousness any satisfaction due to attained desire or not. I find, then, that I value many experiences which are not identical with those which owe their origin primarily to attained desire.

What is true of pleasure I find holds also of displeasure. When my six months' old child was suffering in the grip of a painful disease I did not care a particle whether his mind was sufficiently developed for him to feel a reaction of aversion towards the pain, such as I might have felt under similar circumstances; I wanted the physician not merely to save the child's life but also to put an end to the pain. The pain was regarded by me as an evil for him, apart from any opinion I might have had as to his capacity for that mental reaction to pain which is called aversion.

For me, then, the presence of attained desire does not in itself constitute an experience as good. Attainment without the satisfaction of attainment is valueless. On the other hand there may be no desire and yet the experience be regarded, when the question is raised, as a good. If a state is to be good it must be either pleasurable as described in "5," or it must afford satisfaction. But what is satisfaction? It is an emotion with a certain character of its own, as has anger or fear, and soaked through and through with pleasure. I thus find that the only element common to the states I pronounce good is their pleasure content; that where there is complete absence of pleasure in any form I regard them as intrinsically valueless; that the greater the pleasure content the greater does the good appear to me to be; that the parallel relationship obtains between the displeasurable and my judgment of evil. Since these things are so I can only conclude that for me, at least, the content of the good must be declared to be pleasure.

### The Content of Good: An Objective Study

The conclusion stated in the preceding section, like most of the numerous other autobiographical contributions to ethics, is in itself quite unimportant. It does indeed represent fact, but fact perhaps so colored by the personal equation as to throw no real light upon the ordinary layman's judgment of value. It remains to inquire, therefore, how far the attitude just described is shared by others. The beginnings of an attempt to solve this problem are here reported. The investigation should, indeed, be carried farther through studies made in other localities and other classes in society than those here chosen for examination. But it is comprehensive enough, I believe, to be worthy of careful consideration. With a view, then, to determining the conditions under which the layman will regard an experience as good, I have put the first three propositions of the preceding section to forty adults in interrogative form. The fourth proposition was dropped from the list as of secondary importance. The fifth was also omitted because the facts themselves are notorious and the only question is how they are to be analyzed; and this is rather a question for the expert than the layman. My respondents were about equally divided between men and women. They were from various walks in life. All had at one time or another been students at some college or university, but all, of course, were entirely uncontaminated by any acquaintance with ethics, and none had the least idea of the relation of his answers to controversies about value.

The investigation was conducted by means of a series of personal interviews. I began by stating that I wished to discover something about people's ideas concerning intrinsic value; and intrinsic value was defined and distinguished from extrinsic as at the beginning of Chapter XVIII. Then Mr. Moore's problem, as presented in the words quoted in the preceding section, was put. When the reply was given we passed to "2." I read: "At the age of twenty-seven, Professor Huxley," etc., through the quotation from his letter, and asked: "If Professor Huxley means that the attainment of a long and intensely desired object yielded him no feeling of satisfaction would you regard the re-

ceipt of the prize as of any value to him?" The third question found its subject matter in the incident related under "3." After reciting the facts, as in the text, above, I asked: "Assuming the account of his experience given by the older boy to be correct, did the honor lose all direct value for him when he had entirely ceased to feel any satisfaction at having received it?"

Every effort was made to secure a correct and complete understanding of the question; in particular, to exclude extrinsic value in all its forms from any influence upon the decisions. Accordingly when the three answers had been given, in case one or more of them affirmed value the respondent was asked to leave out of account one after another of the following considerations if they had had any effect upon his estimate of the situation.

I

a. God may be able to see and enjoy the beautiful world, even if the creator and his fellow-men do not.

b. The creator will enjoy the process of creation, as a child may enjoy making a house out of blocks. His pleasure might arise from the pictures which would be before the outer or the inner eye while at his work, or consist in the satisfaction of having done a "good job," as in solving a difficult puzzle. As a means of getting rid of this factor I usually suggested that the beautiful world might come into existence with the wave of a hand.

c. The work of creating this world may be educative, or otherwise have some useful reaction upon the intelligence or character of the creator.

d. The creation of the beautiful would prove the existence of certain potentialities for good in the universe, a knowledge of which would be a source of great satisfaction. A universe in which full many a flower is born to blush unseen may well appeal to a person as being rich in possibilities of happiness and thus as friendly also. It makes you feel comfortable, too, like having a larger income than you can spend; you are not living in constant danger of reaching the limit.

II

a. Huxley's family and friends would receive much satisfaction from the award, and this fact would inevitably in the end give him satisfaction also.

b. He would gain many advantages in the way of professional advancement, etc.

c. He would at least escape the discouragement which might result from a failure to receive the prize. (Strictly speaking the avoidance of an evil is not in itself a good. For example, a man's life can not be said

to be filled with good things simply because he is spared a thousand possible misfortunes.)

d. Since the question had to do with satisfaction at the receipt of the prize, all advantages must be excluded from consideration arising from the development of intellect and character in the course of the work which secured it.

III

a.-d. (as in II).

e. Satisfaction is often derived from the memory of a past success, even though the feeling which it once aroused has departed forever.

f. An honor or any other good once enjoyed, even though later regarded with indifference, "leaves a good taste in the mouth," and thus affects in some degree, even though he may not be aware of it, a man's attitude towards life, perhaps for years, perhaps indefinitely.

These precautions having been observed, only five of the forty persons interviewed exhibited any evidence whatever of the anhedonic attitude. All five answered I as did Mr. Moore himself in the *Principia Ethica*.[7] The man whom I shall call A said the beautiful world would be pleasant to imagine and think about while you were making it. But apart from this he thought it worth while to create it though he could not assign the reason. The creator, however, must continue to know of the existence of his world after it passes out of his sight; otherwise its existence would be valueless. Similarly B replied that the act of creation would give him great satisfaction, just as, when a boy, he used to enjoy putting together "erector" constructions. There was, however, he averred, another factor, which, like his predecessor, he was unable to formulate, although he made many attempts to do so in the several weeks which elapsed between the first and a second interview. C seems to have been moved by the consideration listed as "d" above; but the matter lay too obscurely in her mind to warrant a positive statement to that effect on my part.

To D and E the question was given first in Mr. Moore's formulation, and then (in order to eliminate possible ambiguities in the answers) as follows: Suppose an astronomer, by studying the spectrum of a star, could know it was an exceedingly beautiful or an exceedingly ugly world, or had a satellite of one kind

[7] Mr. Moore seems later to have abandoned this position. See his *Ethics*, p. 249.

or the other. Nevertheless to man it must forever remain a mere point of light, no conscious being ever beholding it as anything else; and the beautiful one, as seen by the naked eye or through the telescope, appearing indistinguishable from the ugly. To this supposition D replied: "The world containing the beautiful star is a better world even though no conscious being will ever know anything more about it than the bare fact that it is beautiful." E said: "For all practical purposes it is the same thing whether the world is beautiful or not, but it would give me more pleasure to think of it as beautiful." Neither found the explanation of his attitude in any of the suggestions of my list.

A's answers to II and III seemed anhedonistic. He was, however, most hesitant in stating his conclusions (in all three problems); and, without any suggestion from me, said, as if in apology for them: "My feelings tell me one thing, reflection tells me the opposite." He thought he had been influenced in this direction by something read in childhood; but just how he did not know. At the close of our interview I told him he was the first out of ten or twelve respondents to take his position. This information did not move him or even interest him in the slightest degree. B's original answers to II and III were anhedonistic in form, but extrinsic considerations played so large a rôle in their determination that I had to give up the attempt to unravel the skein. Anyone who wants him may claim him. The answers of C, D, and E to II and III were unequivocally hedonistic.

If these responses are at all typical they yield the following result: The great majority of laymen evaluate experiences at all points precisely as I do. Of forty persons four appear to answer Mr. Moore's question as Mr. Moore himself originally did; a fifth should perhaps be added to the number. The first two and the fourth had, in part, hedonistic grounds for their original answer; and when these considerations are excluded one of them is hesitant in the extreme. The other two questions (which are really but forms of a single one) are answered in an anhedonistic sense by one person, in an hedonistic sense by three, and too ambiguously to permit of an opinion on my part, by a fifth.

With regard to these replies two alternative interpretations are open. First, they may prove the existence of minds working on fundamentally different lines from those of their fellow-respondents. Secondly, it may be that I did not succeed in carrying my analysis to the end, and in reaching the extrinsic values or other irrelevant considerations upon which they were really based. Such knowledge of man as we now possess makes it improbable that in matters so fundamental as our ultimate attitude towards values, human minds should be built after radically different models. Till decisive evidence to the contrary appears, therefore, I think we are justified in accepting the second alternative. In any event certainly some, probably many, and possibly all laymen pronounce experiences intrinsically good or bad according as they are pleasurable or the reverse.

The only alternative which our data, as we now have them before us, justify us in considering, as far as I can see, is that while pleasure as such might be a good, pleasures, or certain kinds of pleasure enjoyed under certain conditions might, because of the appearance of a new factor not yet discussed, be transformed into what is on the whole an evil. Furthermore, for a similar reason, the facts thus far considered do not compel us to conclude that the greatest pleasure is the greatest good. It might turn out, namely, that the maximum of value involves the presence of an additional factor besides pleasure. These possibilities I shall consider in the following Chapter.

### The Meaning of Good

The second problem which we set ourselves to solve at the beginning of this Chapter was the meaning of the term *good*. When I say the good consists in pleasure what do I mean by calling it good?

If the preceding analyses are correct for me and hold for others also, the good can not be defined by calling it the desired as such. For nature has a not inconsiderable stock of gold bricks on her counter, and any of us may find himself walking off with one of them any time.

Those moralists who, by whatever route, have reached the position that the good can not be equated with the desired are

apt to conclude that good is an unanalyzable, and therefore undefinable term. This conclusion seems to me to rest, in part at least, upon the assumption that the good is either definable in terms of desire, or can not be defined at all. I must confess that I myself can think of no third alternative which has any appearance of plausibility. But the position that a term is undefinable is always a precarious one, for it can at best mean nothing more than this: I do not see any way of defining it. Of course if we go far enough we are certain in the end to reach the limit of definition; nevertheless we are bound to obey the maxim: "Undefinables are not to be multiplied beyond necessity." I thus find myself driven to attempt to define *good*, if not as equivalent to the desired as such, at least as something of which an account can be given in terms of desire. Such a description seems to me to be permitted by the facts of experience.

That which is good is as a matter of fact always capable of becoming an object of desire. The mistake arises, it seems to me, when we "convert" this proposition "simply," as the logicians phrase it, and assert: "All things capable of becoming an object of desire are good." I find in my own experience, as I have said, that the latter proposition does not hold good for me; that while I may actually desire a variety of things, it is only as attainment brings pleasure that, on reflection, I feel any disposition to pronounce the experience good. And this turns out to be true of other persons besides myself. The explanation of this phenomenon seems to me to be as follows. When I reflect upon the ends which desire bids me pursue I discover that they form a chaotic, warring aggregation. There are the desires for the various forms of pleasure. They can be brought into harmonious relation by the acceptance of the principle that when choice is necessary the greater pleasure is to be pursued rather than the less. But there are also the anhedonic desires, the desires, namely, whose object is not pleasure, such as the desire for power and the desire for the good opinion of others. These are constantly liable to conflict with each other. They may also conflict with the desire for pleasure. Now when I face these facts I recognize the necessity of taking a definite and consistent attitude; in other words, I must choose, and choose upon some fixed principle. Just as soon

as this issue is clearly before me I find that only one alternative really appeals to me. I find myself valuing the anhedonic desires on precisely the same principle as the hedonic, in proportion, namely, to the pleasure which their realization affords. Good, thus conceived, can only mean what is desired when reflection has led me to reduce the original chaos of desired objects to a self-consistent or harmonious system.

This, however, is not the end of the matter if I may judge from what self-observation reports as going on in my own consciousness. It is not merely true that I find myself preferring pleasure to the ends set by the anhedonic desires when the two conflict. If this were the whole story it would merely leave the latter in the position of the second best. But in moments of reflection at any rate I find myself attaching no value whatever to the attainment of ends which I distinctly recognize as having no pleasure content. Their attraction, such as it was, seems to have disappeared. It is with them, as it is with the light of the street lamps burning after sunrise. It does not retire to second place; for all practical purposes it fades away into nothingness. It is indeed possible that the momentum generated by past pursuit might still carry me along the old paths, as far as action is concerned. But what I can only describe as glad acceptance of the end would be lacking. I might even perceive myself moving in the direction of the object in despite of myself, my will not being equal to the effort required to stop my course. Indeed, a man in such circumstances might conceivably find himself at the very same moment pushed forward and cursing himself for the way he was going.[8] The good, thus, is not the desired as such. It is that which is desired when we "sit down in a cool hour," reflect upon the relations that obtain between the various ends that appeal to us, and squarely face the fact that attainment of some is incompatible with that of others. We thereupon find ourselves cleaving to some while the attraction of others may vanish. That which maintains its place in our affection under these conditions is what we call good. If a

[8] *Cf.* Shakespeare's 129th Sonnet; and along very different lines. Marmeladov's soliloquy in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment,* Ch. II. *Cf.* James, *Principles of Psychology,* Vol. II.

definition must be packed into a single phrase, we may say that an experience is intrinsically good when it is capable of becoming the object of a reflective desire, as the term *reflective* has been used in the preceding description.[9]

The situation described in the last paragraph must not for one moment be confused with another. I may deliberately yield to a desire from whose attainment I expect little or no satisfaction, without condemning myself for having sacrificed my good in the pursuit of a shadow. For example, I may address myself to the task of climbing one rung higher on the social ladder. I may have myself observed and even experienced what Paley says about this form of emulation.[10] I may know its pleasures are brief and its risks great. Under these circumstances I may still obey the urge of the impulse, not from what I expect to get, but from what I hope to avoid. Unsatisfied desires sometimes become intensely displeasurable, and I may obey an impulse not for its own sake, so to speak, but for the sake of getting rid of the pressure which it exerts. Thus in this case also I am moved in the last resort by a hedonic valuation.

The position that pleasure constitutes the sole element of value in experience, although it is not the sole object of direct desire, is called "Ethical Hedonism." This doctrine is to be carefully distinguished from the view that pleasure is the sole object of desire, which is called "Psychological Hedonism." Neither ought to be confused with a third view, which by no means follows from either the second or the first, namely, that the sole object is my own pleasure. Psychological Hedonism may hold that desire may be aroused for the pleasure of others as well as self. And the principles of Ethical Hedonism may of course be employed in determining what constitutes the good of my neighbor just as well as my own good.*

[9] *Cf.* Sidgwick, *Methods of Ethics,* 7th Edition, p. 111.

[10] See above, Chapter XVIII, page 360.

* See Notes, XIX, "The Meaning and Content of Good," p. 516.

## Chapter XX

# THE COMPARISON OF VALUES

Hedonism asserts that there is one element that is common to all states which may properly be called intrinsically good, and that this element is pleasure. Where a state containing elements of displeasure is called good this can only be justified on the ground that it is a means to some preponderant pleasure, or that it contains both pleasurable and displeasurable elements in which the former outweigh the latter. The first is really a case of extrinsic goodness; the second is a state which in strict accuracy should be called both good and bad, or else predominantly good.

Hedonism asserts further that pleasures differ only in amount. Most Hedonists believe in addition that differences in amount, when sufficiently great, can be compared and one experience be known to be more pleasurable than the other. These two positions must now be examined. We may begin with the former.

### Qualitative Differences in Values

The view that pleasures differ only in quantity can best be examined in relation to its negation. The alternative view is that pleasures differ in quality as well as quantity; that some pleasures are high and others low; and that, on this scale the higher pleasures are always intrinsically more worthy of pursuit than the less high, while the low pleasures are worse than merely valueless, they are positively bad. No one, as far as I am aware, has ever succeeded in defining these terms. They must apparently be taken as unanalyzable and thus ultimate. All that can be said about them is that they point to the existence of another standard or criterion of the value of a state of consciousness besides the amount of pleasure it affords; a standard which takes precedence over the merely quantitative standard, if there be such a thing, wherever they come into conflict with each other.

This distinction between higher and lower goods, in my opinion,

marks facts and very important facts. But before we can decide upon its relation to a purely quantitative theory of value like Hedonism, we must inquire carefully what is its precise nature and what its source.

### The Explanation of the Distinction Between Higher and Lower Goods

There are two points of view from which we can look out upon the life of human beings about us. I shall suggest for each a name which, though not entirely adequate, will perhaps serve as well as others to mark the distinction I have in mind. The first I shall call the sympathetic point of view. It is characterized by the fact that I enter directly into the joys and sorrows of my fellows without regard to the appearance they present to me in the act of enjoying or suffering. Any pleasure I feel in watching them or thinking about them is due immediately to altruistic satisfaction in their joy. The significance of this attitude will appear more clearly from an examination of its antithesis. This latter I shall call the dramatic or stage view of life. For it

> "All the world's a stage
> And all the men and women merely players."

Other persons and their experiences are here valued by me in proportion as they contribute to my good as a spectator of the great drama of human existence. It is in this capacity that I pass æsthetic and antipathetic judgments upon their volitions and the character behind them, denominate them either beautiful or ugly, and demand the former and call for the banishment of the latter. This attitude, however, really includes more than was enumerated in the descriptions of Chapter X. For the people on the stage must among other things be interesting, as the theatre-goer uses this term; and this of course means that, whatever happens, their performances must not bore me in my capacity as spectator. That is to say, what I want as a spectator is a good performance. The pleasures of the actors will therefore appeal to me as good only in so far as they are the product of effort, struggle, and strength of will; they will appeal to me as bad in so far as the states in connection with which they

arise bore me or disgust me. Accordingly the people on the stage, if they are to get my applause, must be active, vigorous, not mere dull cattle or passive lumps of matter. They must be adventurous in spirit in some sense of this term; or if not that, they must have dangers and difficulties thrust upon them, and must meet them in gallant style, like "sports." If I am an exclusive enthusiast for this kind of a spectacle and happen at the same time to be an Oriental despot like King Kon Tchien of Yueh (see Chapter XVI, page 325) I shall see no reason why I may not provide myself with material when nature's supply runs low. If I am a highly intellectual person my taste may not run so completely to action in the popular sense of this term. What I will like to see will be intellectual activity and vigor, and the pleasures I shall want to watch people enjoy will be those connected with the use of the intellect. In any event there must be struggle or effort of some kind, and up to a certain point the more the better. On the whole, for most spectators, the struggles of the will are the most interesting to watch. Hence the maxim: "A good man struggling with adversity is a sight for the gods." Of course the full exploitation of such scenes on the part of the spectator, so that he may extract from them the largest measure of enjoyment, requires the possession of some sympathy, some power of putting oneself in the place of others. But it does not require a great deal. We may remember Professor James' reference to the Russian woman at the play who was weeping at the sorrows of the personages on the stage while her coachman was freezing to death outside. Mr. Pecksniff is in certain respects an excellent representative of this attitude towards life. "It is always satisfactory," he once remarked, "to feel in keen weather that many other people are not so warm as you are. For if everyone were warm and well fed we should lose the satisfaction of admiring the fortitude with which certain conditions of men bear cold and hunger." But Mr. Pecksniff's capacity to put himself in the place of others, —such as it was,—never went far enough to lead him to imperil a single interest of his own for the sake of anyone else.

The stage attitude towards life of course gives rise to its own vocabulary. Those experiences of the actors which I enjoy watch-

ing I shall call good; their opposite bad. They are, in fact, good and bad for me, in that they afford me pleasure or displeasure respectively in my capacity as spectator of the play.

It should go without saying that, looking at myself in a mental mirror, so to speak, I may assume the attitude of spectator of myself. In this case I apply the terms of the theater to my own experiences also, and thus may make the same demands upon self that I do upon others. Since I am at once actor and spectator, the spectator's good is as such my good. On the other hand, if as actor I have no self-consciousness but completely forget to watch myself, lose sight, as it were, of the looking-glass, then the evils which other spectators may have to endure in seeing me play my part are not shared by me. They may, however, of course, appear when memory begins to work—provided memory ever gets to work.

There is general agreement among psychologists that if we confine our attention rigidly to the pleasure element in our various experiences we shall discover among them no differences other than quantitative. If the preceding account of the source of the distinction between the higher and the lower pleasures is adequate, the position taken by the psychologists is sound. For according to our description the distinction between the higher and the lower pleasures is due not to anything in the pleasures themselves, but to differences in the conditions under which they arise. It is a distinction made by the spectator, not—if I may use the term—by the experiencer as such. The higher pleasures are those which are felt by a man who is doing or experiencing that which arouses my admiration, or at least my interest, as I watch him actually or in imagination; or in other words, they are the products of actions that afford a fine spectacle. And if my feelings as spectator seem to go out to the pleasure as well as to the activities by which it was brought into existence, this is only a parallel to the principle that where you love a woman you have a tendency to love the members of her family. What most effectively arouses admiration and indeed interest is the exhibition of power, and power involves activity. Hence the higher pleasures are those which are the fruits of activity, whether of intellect or will. Those, on the other hand, are low

which are either the product of activities that are directly revolting to me as spectator, or which at best bore me to watch. It must be remembered that I may be the spectator of myself and thus take the same attitude towards my own pleasures. And it must be noted that these distinctions between higher and lower seem never to be applied to displeasures. The reason for this peculiar phenomenon may be that in the presence of displeasure in real life we drop the stage attitude, since it is much easier to sympathize with people's displeasures than with their pleasures. But whatever the explanation there can be no doubt about the fact.

### The Revolt Against Perfection

The foregoing explanation seems to me to supply the key to a good many facts. It accounts among other things for the attitude taken by many people towards perfection of any kind. "The picture of the ideal hedonistic state is tame and insignificant," writes Professor Royce, and supposes that he has thereby annihilated Hedonism.[1] This characterization contains a good deal of truth in so far as it is the expression of the stage view of life. The play to be interesting can not be one long narration of happiness; there must be evil to arouse the reaction of the will against evil; it is not the good as such but the conquest of the evil by the good that is interesting to watch. When the couple have reached the point where they will live happily ever afterwards the curtain is rung down and the play is over.

These facts do not prove, however, that pleasure as such is not a good. For the argument can be turned equally against any other formulation of the good. It holds, for example, against the claims of moral perfection to be the ultimate good. Here also the man in the parquet wants to see not success, but struggle toward success with its inevitable attendant failures. Madame du Deffand, who conducted the most famous of the Parisian salons in the great days of Louis XV, though apparently a darling of the gods, was, in fact, a profoundly unhappy being. The trouble was in part that she was very lonely; she had no intimate friend. This woman, she complained, had this fault and that woman

[1] *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*, p. 186.

that fault, and therefore she could not abide them. But then, there was the Duchesse de Choiseul. Yes, but she was perfect, and this was the worst fault of all. "Elle est parfaite; et c'est un plus grand défaut qu'on ne pense et qu'on ne saurait imaginer." Of course! How can a faultless person be interesting to a man or woman who cares for people primarily only in so far as they afford him an entertaining spectacle? [2]

## The Basis and Limitations of the Claims of the Higher Goods

So much by way of description and explanation. Now for the normative problem. What is to be our attitude towards the higher goods when the pursuit of them would involve loss of pleasure to the agent? My answer is first that beauty is one of our most precious possessions, and that there is as certainly a beauty of manners, behavior, and enjoyment as there is a beauty of color, form, and sound. Since we are spectators of our own lives it may be our pleasure to embody beauty in our conduct. Since others are spectators of our lives it may conceivably become our duty to do so.

But there is certainly a limit to this duty. "Would you have us die of cold that our town may look nice for visitors?" inquired a Leningrad sledgedriver of Mr. Ransome when the latter was complaining of the injury done to the appearance of the city in the years since the revolution by the wrecking of buildings in order to obtain firewood. Observe the complications introduced into the problem by the fact that the wrecked houses spoil the appearance of the city not merely for the passing foreign traveler but for its inhabitants also. The same problem arose again and again a generation ago in the destruction of some of the picturesque slums in the Italian cities. I for one can never be too thankful that I saw many of these fascinating places before the heavy hand of the reformer had been laid upon them. But I

[2] William James's characterization of the Chautauqua Lake Assemblies in his essay, "What Makes a Life Significant?" appears to me partly a statement of certain truths which I have tried to present above in Chapter XVIII, p. 369 f., partly an expression of the stage view of life. For Madame du Deffand, see Lytton Strachey, *Books and Characters*, p. 99.

can not wish the work undone. There is thus a limit to the sacrifice which people can properly be asked to make for beauty.

"The budding poet, strolling city streets, drinks in the changing spectacle like wine. The beggar woman, crouching in picturesque rags among burnt umber shadows, makes for him a casual Rembrandt. Athwart the jeweled shoulders gleaming from passing carriages stands out the street girl's haggard painted face. Wonderful, terrible contrasts of this life!—he thinks, with all of youth's æsthetic thrill. But if the call of real life comes to him, he is ready to act, to dare, and to endure that this wonderful contrast may disappear and the world become a prosaic better place for a woman to live in."[3]

Similarly I may admire a cultivated man. But I shall hardly be justified in demanding that he train his powers of appreciation in art and science merely in order that he may present a more agreeable appearance to me.

Fortunately, however, the problem practically never arises in this form. The man with a capacity for appreciation in the field of art or science (and for any other the attempt would end in failure) has reasons enough for working to develop it apart from the thought of the impression he will make upon the minds of a few educated people. Furthermore, in many cases the aim to develop beauty of mind is self-destructive. In the main, beauty of character comes to those who are thinking of something else; and this is true, to a very considerable extent, of all forms of personal perfection.

The same principles apply to the removal of the ugly from life. If I may be allowed to drop into autobiography once more, there are few sights so disgusting to me as a drunken man. In the interest of comeliness I would be prepared to argue, if necessary, for the elimination of drunkenness from life on the same grounds which I could urge against bringing the garbage pail into the dining-room. But it so happens that there is no occasion for taking this line. The evils of alcoholic intemperance are visited with such a horrible bountifulness upon the victim himself, his unfortunate family, and society at large that they afford by themselves a sufficient reason for the attempt to drive this

[3] Ethel Puffer Howes, "The Great Refusal," *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 108, p. 625. *Cf.* Norman Hapgood, "Platonic Friendship," the same, Vol. 84, p. 835, for Stendthal's objections to the freedom of the life of unmarried young women in the United States.

vice out of the world. Its immediate repulsiveness simply throws one additional weight into the scales.

The world is full of single-track minds. Flaubert writes:

"What I like above everything else is form, provided that it be beautiful, and nothing more . . . For me there is nothing in the world except beautiful verses, well-turned, harmonious, resonant phrases, glorious sunsets, moonlight, colored paintings, antique marbles and shapely heads. Beyond that, nothing."[4]

There are some who take a similar attitude towards the beautiful in human conduct. Nietzsche, among others, was precisely this kind of a man.[5] As against all such one-sidedness ethics should help us "to see life steadily and see it whole." If there be any conflict between the sympathetic point of view and the stage point of view, as ordinarily there is not, no reason can be found why the hedonic preponderance should not decide the issue in each instance. But no solution for such conflicts can be offered in general terms. The problem, like that of the destruction of the waterfalls in order to generate electricity, must always be studied in the light of the concrete situation in which it is imbedded.

### The Fundamental Postulate of the Hedonic Calculus

We are now ready to turn to the third of the theses which constitute the fundamentals of Hedonism, the proposition, namely, that pleasures can be compared in amount, and that at least under favorable conditions one pleasure may properly be declared to be greater than another.

This assertion thrusts us into the midst of one of the fiercest controversies of modern ethics. Many moralists claim that it is utterly impossible to make any comparison of pleasures in respect to quantity. They hold that this impossibility is not due merely to the weakness of our faculties, or the absence of auxiliary apparatus. It is inherent in the very nature of the facts, because quantitative terms are absolutely meaningless when applied to such a state of consciousness as pleasure. If a man should ask you what are the cubic contents of a homesick

[4] J. C. Tarver, *Gustave Flaubert as Seen in His Works and Correspondence;* quoted in *The Dial* for October 16, 1895, p. 208.

[5] See *Werke,* Vol. XII, p. 86, sec. 168.

boarding-school boy's longing for home, or what was the weight of Lear's anger when his daughter thrust him out into the night and storm, he would manifestly be talking nonsense. Similarly, it is asserted, all talk about amounts of pleasure is completely meaningless. From this the conclusion is drawn that Hedonism, even if true as an account of the nature of the good, is wholly useless as a guide to action.

### Bentham's Analysis of the Factors of Pleasure Value

We shall do best to begin our study of this contention by enumerating the elements which on the hedonistic view are involved in the determination of the quantitative value of a pleasurable experience. These elements, according to Bentham's famous list, are as follows: (1) Intensity; (2) duration; (3) certainty or uncertainty; (4) propinquity or remoteness; (5) fecundity; (6) purity; and (7) extent.[6] The fecundity of a pleasure or displeasure is defined as "the chance it has of being followed by sensations of the same kind; that is, pleasure, if it be a pleasure; pain, if it be a pain." Its purity is defined as "the chances it has of not being followed by sensations of the opposite kind; that is, pains, if it be a pleasure, and pleasure if it be a pain." Extent is the number of persons to whom it extends or, in other words, who are affected by it. The other terms explain themselves.

In the preceding list propinquity, it is clear, has properly no place. To be sure the prospect of pleasure exerts a stronger influence upon the will if the enjoyment is imminent than if it is distant. But when we pass upon an experience objectively we recognize that its intrinsic value is no greater because we expect to enjoy it this afternoon rather than tomorrow, except as remoteness can be regarded as increasing the likelihood of its slipping from our grasp. This consideration, however, brings it under the rubric of certainty. There remain, therefore, six factors which, on the hedonistic theory, may enter into the determination of the amount of pleasure or displeasure involved in any given experience. The point in controversy, accordingly, concerns the possibility of so uniting these various items that they may prop-

[6] *Principles of Morals and Legislation,* Ch. IV.

erly be said to form a sum—a sum which could be compared in amount with another sum incident to some other experience and derived from it in the same manner.

This problem may be dealt with in either of two ways, both of which, I believe, lead to the same result. A direct analysis may be made of each factor in Bentham's list with a view to determining its capacity to serve as an object of measurement. I shall employ this method later in the Chapter. Or, in the second place, it may be shown (1) that judgments representing the comparison of amounts of pleasure are actually formed; and (2) that such judgments, at least in many instances, are worthy of trust. To this second problem we now turn. Our procedure will consist in an exhibition of situations in which there would be general agreement among laymen as to the existence of a clear balance of good over evil or the reverse, and a like agreement as to where this balance is to be found. In the last Chapter I tried to show that men do actually regard pleasure as the ultimate good, the anti-hedonistic theories which some people hold affording no evidence to the contrary, since there may be a great difference between what we believe and what we believe we believe. If this conclusion is sound the comparisons of goods or evils here presented are at bottom comparisons of pleasures or displeasures. Furthermore the agreement as to the location of the balance of pleasure is too extensive to be a product of chance. It follows that these acts of evaluation are not mere arbitrary processes of mind but that they deal with realities, and under favorable conditions the judgments which embody their findings can be relied upon as true.

### Examples of Quantitative Comparison of Pleasures

I shall begin with the answers to a casuistry question which I have put before many students, all of them, of course, entirely unacquainted with theories of ethics, whether mine or those of anyone else.

In a certain railroad wreck a woman was imprisoned in the debris in such a way that escape was impossible. Her husband, who might have extricated himself with an effort, deliberately chose to remain and die with her, in order that he might give her the support and comfort

of his presence in her last moments. She herself, we must suppose, was not aware of the possibility of his escape, otherwise his aim would have been defeated. The man was a clerk with the expectations of the average of his class, was without children, but had a mother living with him in his home who was very much devoted to him but not dependent upon him for financial support. What is to be said of the moral character of his choice?

A very common answer read as follows: "The amount of comfort he could give his wife in these few minutes was insignificant in comparison with the pleasure he could have given his mother if he had lived; and therefore he ought to have attempted to escape."

The following incident appeared some years ago in one of the magazines. A farmer, sick at the house of a friend at a distance from his own home, learns that a band of roving pigs have broken into his barn and are eating up all his corn—the principal harvest of the entire year. He accordingly sends a request to a neighbor living a quarter of a mile from the farm to nail up his barn door. But the latter, although there is no ill-will between them, refuses to do the favor solely because he is not willing to take the trouble. If the reader cares to make an inquiry he will find widespread condemnation of the churlish farmer on the ground that the sacrifice in the way of effort which he was asked to make was insignificant in comparison with the service which he might have rendered.

In the story of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, as presented in the motion pictures, Dr. Jekyll is shown ministering to the sick in a free clinic which he had established for the very poor. He has an engagement that evening for dinner. As the dinner hour approaches he finds that an examination of all the patients still waiting in his office will detain him well past the hour of the appointment. Rather than send anyone away uncared for he dispatches a note to his hostess excusing himself from attendance. He is, of course, well aware that such a disarrangement of plans at the last minute will cause her genuine annoyance. But he judges, as the spectators are expected to do, that this is a matter of far less importance than the alleviation of present sufferings and the attempt to arrest the progress of disease.

When Mark Twain was once revisiting his old home at Hannibal, Missouri, he inquired about a girl whom he had known in his boyhood. The answer was: "Died in the insane asylum three or four years ago—never was out of it from the time she went in; and was always suffering too; never got a shred of her mind back." Upon this information the author comments as follows:

"If he spoke the truth, here was a heavy tragedy indeed. Thirty-six years in a mad house that some young fools might have some fun! I was a small boy at the time; and I saw those giddy young ladies come tiptoeing where Miss ——— sat reading at midnight by a lamp. The girl at the head of the file wore a shroud and a doughface; she crept behind the victim, touched her on the shoulder and she looked up and screamed and then fell into convulsions. She did not recover from the fright, but went mad. In these days it seems incredible that people believed in ghosts so short a time ago. But they did."[7]

Thackeray, in *Henry Esmond,* writes that the Duke of Marlborough fought the battle of Malplaquet, in which 30,000 men were killed and wounded, "so that he might figure once more in the *Gazette* and hold his places and pensions a little longer." For Thackeray, and I venture to assert for all his readers except perhaps a few writers on ethics, the moral callousness of Marlborough displays itself precisely in the enormous disparity between the good that moved him and the evil which ought to have restrained him.

### The Scope of These Comparisons

The preceding illustrations represent unusual situations. While, then, they may prove that quantitative comparison of pleasures and displeasures is a possibility, they do not necessitate the conclusion that this is anything more than an isolated phenomenon. It is possible, however, to carry the argument a step farther, and to show that the weighing against each other of pleasures and displeasures, under the names of advantages and disadvantages, is an integral part of the solution of all the more

[7] *Life on the Mississippi,* Ch. LIII.

complicated problems of life. Advantages and disadvantages are obviously nothing more than names for goods and evils, or the causes of goods and evils. If, then, the good is pleasure we are here in fact comparing pleasures.

This kind of evaluation is something which the more intelligent members of a community like our own are doing as a matter of course every day in the week. For precisely in proportion as conduct is based upon a reflection which concerns itself with the situation as a whole precisely in this proportion does the weighing of comparative values, whether positive or negative, become inevitable. "There is no cloud without a silver lining," and there seem to be few silver linings without clouds. "Take what you want and pay for it," is nature's invitation to us. So runs an ancient saw. It is not in fact true that we are always able to take what we want. But it is true that whatever we do succeed in taking we shall inevitably be required to pay for, and in full.

It may be worth while to illustrate the above thesis by a few examples of conclusions in the field of practice that involve explicit balancing of advantages and disadvantages, a balancing based upon the assumption that it is possible to determine on which side the proponderance of value lies. If the reader accepts the reasoning of the authorities quoted he will find that he too is committed to the same assumption.

Somewhat over forty years ago Mr. Stanley Jevons wrote a little book entitled *The State in Relation to Labour*. It was a plea for active interference on the part of the state for the purpose of protecting the laboring classes against some of the worst evils of the competitive system. In the course of one of his arguments he writes as follows:

"Evidently there must be cases where it is incumbent on one citizen to guard against danger to other citizens. If one man digs a pit in search of coal [on communal land], and not finding coal, leaves the hole uncovered, to be half hidden by grass and bramble, he is laying a mere trap for his neighbors; he might as well at once lay man-traps and spring-guns in the old-fashioned way. Are all neighbors to grope their way about in a constant fear of a horrible lingering death, because he dislikes the trouble of filling up or covering the pit he has made? So obviously unreasonable was such neglect that we find a customary law

existing in the Forest of Dean two hundred years ago requiring every owner of an abandoned pit to cover it over."[8]

I may assume, I suppose, with Mr. Jevons that this will appear to every reader a sensible and proper provision of the law.

In the following passage Justice Holmes of the United States Supreme Court is inquiring under what circumstances a man may injure another in his person or property without being held to legal liability. Omitting considerations touching the state of the agent's mind,

"The answer is suggested by the commonplace that the intentional infliction of temporal damage or the doing of an act manifestly likely to inflict such damage and inflicting it is actionable if done without just cause. . . . There are various justifications. In these instances the justification is that the defendant is privileged knowingly to inflict the damage complained of. But whether and how far a privilege should be allowed is a question of policy. . . . When the question of policy is faced it will be seen to be one which cannot be answered by generalities but must be determined by the particular character of the case. . . . Plainly the worth of the result, or the gain from allowing the act to be done, has to be compared with the loss which it inflicts. . . . For instance a man has a right to set up a shop in a small village which can support but one of a kind although he expects and intends to ruin a deserving widow who is established there already. . . . He has a right to give honest answers to inquiries about a servant, although he intends thereby to prevent his getting a place. But the reasons for these several privileges are different. The first rests on the economic postulate that free competition is worth more to society than it costs. . . . The [second], upon the proposition that the benefits of free access to information in some cases and within some limits outweighs the harm to an occasional unfortunate."[9]

Our final illustration, like its predecessors, shall be taken from the law of torts. What will the law regard as constituting reasonable care when one person has inflicted physical injury upon another through his action?

"It would seem clear that for the proper determination of this question of fact there are two chief matters for consideration. The first

[8] P. 2, *cf.*, p. 10.

[9] Oliver Wendell Holmes, "Privilege, Malice and Intent," *Harvard Law Review*, Vol. 8, p. 3. The entire article is worth consulting. See also Francis B. Sayre, *Harvard Law Review*, Vol. 36, p. 662. The "right" affirmed in the above quotation is of course a legal right.

is the magnitude of the risk to which other persons are exposed, while the second is the importance of the object to be attained by the dangerous form of activity. The reasonableness of any conduct will depend upon the proportion between these two elements. To expose others to danger for a disproportionate object is unreasonable, whereas an equal risk for a better cause may lawfully be run without negligence. By driving trains at fifty miles an hour, railway companies have caused many fatal accidents which could quite easily have been avoided by reducing the speed to ten miles, but this additional safety would be attained at too great a cost of public convenience, and therefore in neglecting this precaution the companies do not fall below the standard of reasonable care and are not guilty of negligence." [10]

I have elected to take my illustrations from one department of a single field. Hundreds of others were equally at my disposal. For in every problem of policy, whether it concerns the individual, the family, a commercial organization, or the state, there lies, concealed or open, not merely a question of the most effective means to a given end, but also a question of the comparative value of mutually exclusive ends. And if, as I have contended, people do value concrete situations according to their pleasure content, these comparisons of values are at bottom comparisons of pleasures.

The attempt to calculate and determine the relative amount of different pleasures is thus a fact. Furthermore, where conditions are favorable, there is a large, at some points complete, or well-nigh complete unanimity of results. Such agreement, as has already been noted, can not be brushed aside as the outcome of mere chance. Its source must lie in the objective nature of the situation with which the intellect was dealing. It is not otherwise here than it is with the astronomers' classification of stars according to the intensity of the impression made by their light as it falls upon the retina. Inasmuch as this classification represents the universal findings of careful and often independent observers it is properly regarded as in some very important sense a faithful reflection of reality.

[10] Sir John Salmond, *Jurisprudence*, 7th Edition, 1924, Sec. 142, p. 416.

### The Analysis of Quantitative Values in Pleasure

The preceding exposition employs the method of argument which the logicians call *ex ambulando*. The possibility of walking is proved by walking. I wish to supplement this procedure by a more direct analysis. I propose, therefore, to examine the elements of value represented in Bentham's list, as presented above, page 420, with a view to determining whether they are or are not capable of measurement and thus of quantitative comparison one with another.

Before starting on this investigation I wish to indicate its precise aim. The pre-Columbian American Indian, utterly unsupplied as he was with instruments of measurement, might have had some difficulty in determining whether Mt. Rainier was higher—reckoning from base to summit—than Mt. Hood. But he would not have hesitated an instant in pronouncing it higher that Mt. Tamalpais or Mt. Washington. Now the validity of any such judgment of comparative height depends upon the abstract possibility of finding some unit of measurement and applying it to each height in such fashion that one might be said to contain $m$ units and the other $n$. Our Indian need not know anything of such units, to say nothing of being able to apply them to either object. He merely looks at one mountain and compares it in memory with the impression made by the other and without analysis declares one to be the higher. But the meaning and also the validity of this procedure presuppose the existence of appropriate units of magnitude. If such units could be found we might then be in a fair way to determine the accuracy of his estimates. If they do not exist, all talk about accuracy is nonsense because the words *higher* and *lower* are without meaning. The problem immediately before us is a parallel one. It concerns the possibility of finding units of magnitude in the field of pleasure and displeasure, not with a view to discovering how the lay mind works when it judges one pleasure to be greater than another, but rather to determining whether *greater* and *less* mean anything when applied to pleasure and displeasure.

Of the six factors which, according to our revision of Bentham's

list (see above, page 420), determine the value of a pleasure, five are, in the abstract, clearly capable of measurement. *Certainty* is but another name for degree of probability. *Fecundity* and *purity*, as the *chance* that one experience will be followed by another of the same or opposite kind, are probabilities also. All probabilities are in theory capable of numerical determination, however great the difficulties which such a task might encounter in practice. The same is true of extent and duration. Thus of Bentham's items there remains only *intensity* whose right to a place on a quantitative scale is fairly open to dispute. The question whether intensities vary in amount, and, if so, whether they can be measured or estimated, is thus the crux on which the availability of Hedonism as a guide to conduct in the last resort depends. It would be a queer trick of nature to allow us to approach so near the goal and then cut us off just as we were about to cross the line. But nature, as Mr. Squeers remarked, "is a rum 'un." So there is nothing for us to do but thrust behind our backs the temptation to trust general presumptions of any kind. We accordingly turn to a direct study of the problem: Is the intensity of pleasure and displeasure capable of measurement?

The problem is part of a much larger one, namely: Can the intensity of any mental state be measured? The enormous literature on this subject which has grown up within the last two generations deals almost entirely with the intensity of sensations. What is true with regard to the intensity of sensations should hold in principle equally of pleasure and displeasure. Distance is the same concept when applied to the solid ground beneath us, an expanse of water, or the space that stretches between the stars; and the fundamental assumptions upon which measurement rests in each case are identical. This statement holds equally for intensity as such. For intensity is intensity wherever found, just as extensity is extensity. Accordingly however different the technique of actual measurement may be in different cases, the fundamental assumptions underlying the measurement of intensity must remain everywhere the same, if such measurements are possible at all. In order, therefore, that I may avail myself of the vast labors which the psychologists have expended

upon the subject of mental measurement I shall direct the discussion to the field of sensation.

## Is Intensity a Quantity?

The problem of measuring the intensity of sensations was first raised in systematic fashion by Gustav Theodor Fechner, particularly in his famous work *Elemente der Psychophysik*, published in 1860. Its fundamental theses are reducible to two: (1) The intensity of every sensation is a measurable magnitude, consisting in a determinable number of equal units; (2) The unit in question is the minimum difference noticeable between two intensities of this same sensation.

To measure means to discover how many times a unit is contained in a given magnitude. Hence no measurement is possible without some sort of unit. This is obtained in the following way. Suppose a given stimulus to produce a sensation of a certain intensity; for instance, a tone. A stimulus can then be found which will produce a tone that is just perceptibly louder than its predecessor. Now Fechner declares that the just noticeable differences between intensities are all equal. For example, the just noticeable difference between two tones or lights of low intensity is identical in amount with the just noticeable difference between two of high intensity. This assertion, I must point out, is far from self-evident. It might happen, for example, that as the sensation increased in intensity the amount of difference between it and its next neighbor in the series which was just capable of being observed would increase or decrease. Indeed, some investigators hold that the former is precisely what happens. Whatever the facts may be, Fechner's whole theory rests on the absolute equality of just noticeable differences, for this gives him the desired units. With these in his hands he believes he can measure the intensities of sensations by counting the number of just noticeable intensity differences which they contain.

In opposition to this view many psychologists today hold that intensities do not have a quantitative character at all, and are therefore not capable of measurement in the proper sense of the term. This position I shall now proceed to examine.

The argument in its behalf has been put in various forms, of which the following are typical specimens:

"In most cases the greater intensity cannot be analyzed in such a way that we are able to perceive the less intensities as parts of it. In the loud tone the weak tone is not contained so and so many times, as an inch is contained twelve times in a foot." [11] "A sensation is a perfectly simple element of our consciousness which cannot be separated into parts and therefore cannot be put together out of smaller units." [12]

These statements define the issue between Fechner and his opponents admirably. With all due respect for the great names arrayed on this side, however, I can not but feel that their arguments completely beg the question. The lower intensity is not contained in the higher in the sense in which an inch is contained twelve times in a foot; no sensational intensity can be separated into parts in the way in which a foot can be separated into inches. Nothing could be at once more true and more obvious. But what does it all prove? Merely this, that intensity is not the same thing as extensity. But does it follow from this that intensity is not a quantity? Only on the assumption that all quantity is extensity.[13] But this is precisely the thing that was to be proved. In the above argument it is not proved but assumed.

We may suspect that the confusion of mind thus exhibited is due, at least in large part, to the carrying over into the psychological laboratory of the ideas and ideals of the physical sciences. Physics recognizes the existence of no other elements than extensity and number. Therefore, whatever is not of these can not be quantity. But from this it does not follow for an instant that the world of consciousness can not contain a form of quantity of which physics as such has never heard. Whether it does or not must be determined by observation, and by observation alone.

"If extensity and intensity are both quantities," asks Bergson, "what are their common elements?" [14] I reply, the immediately

[11] Von Kries, *Vierteljahrschrift für wissenschaftliche Philosophie*, Vol. 6, p. 275.

[12] Muensterberg, *Beiträge zur experimentellen Psychologie*, Vol. 3, p. 5.

[13] Under extensity I am, for the sake of simplicity, including "protensity" or the extensity of time.

[14] *Les données immédiates de la conscience*, p. 2.

apprehended appropriateness of the terms *equality, more,* and *less,* together with the shadings of the two latter, *a little more, a great deal more,* and so on, applied to sensations and other conscious elements of the same quality.

This appropriateness is, in my experience, felt most keenly when intensity rises from a low point to a high, as the noise made by the approaching train or the crescendo in a musical composition. The words by which one naturally expresses such an experience, *more, more, more,* may be due to the poverty of the language. But such a suggestion, I believe, does not represent the direct testimony of the unsophisticated consciousness. The words seem, rather, to point to what is properly describable as the addition of successive increments, whereby the intensity of the sensation becomes greater and greater in amount. The sensation as it grows is what it was before plus something more of the same kind. This something more, to be sure, is not added in the same way as a second inch is added to the first by being placed by its side. On the contrary, the increase enters into the very texture of the sensation. But to claim that this difference between extensive and intensive magnitudes necessitates reading the latter out of the class of magnitudes is to make a perfectly wanton use of the *a priori* method—and that in the face, as it seems to me, of the testimony of immediate experience.

If intensity be not a magnitude how do we come to apply to it the terms *equal, more,* and *less?* The answer offered today by the overwhelming majority of those psychologists who deny intensity to be a magnitude, properly so-called, is that quantitative terms can be applied to intensities because the latter can be arranged in a serial order and the number of steps between the two members of the series can be counted. The intensities of the light of the stars supply the classical example. In the second century before Christ the astronomer Hipparchus arranged all the visible stars in six groups in such a fashion that the typical star of the first class is as much brighter than that of the second class as the latter is brighter than the typical member of the third class, and so on all the way down. Since his time many other astronomers have gone over his results, at once refining and verifying them, until today every one of the 6,000 naked eye

stars—to confine our attention to them—has its assigned place on a scale of magnitudes. The twenty brightest stars have been distributed through three magnitudes in place of the original one into which they were huddled, in order that, for certain mystical reasons, the total number of classes might not exceed six. They are now numbered, rather awkwardly, minus one, zero, and one, respectively. In each group, distances as fine as one-tenth of a magnitude are recognized. In consequence the entire range of intensities from that of the brilliant Sirius to the faintest star twinkling just within the reach of vision is divided into more than seventy steps or degrees.

Quantitative terms, then, it is admitted by this view, have an actual and valid application to intensities. These can be arranged in a serial order in accordance with their distance from a given point; and it is perfectly possible to say that a certain intensity is twice as distant from that point on the scale as is some other intensity. Accordingly, when a man speaks of one sound as louder than another, or one grapefruit as more sour than another, this means that the former is more distant than the latter from some point on a scale which he is using for the moment as his starting point.

It is clear that every word of the preceding account is true. But does it prove that intensity is not a quantity? What is meant by distance between two points in a series? Stumpf answers: "Degree of dissimilarity" ("Grad der Unähnlichkeit").[15] But dissimilarity is a term expressing a certain relationship and involving, like all other relationships, at least two terms. Where dissimilarity is asserted we are accordingly justified in inquiring, "Dissimilarity in respect to what?" As far as the mere series itself is concerned it might just as well be quantitative dissimilarity as anything else, because it is precisely such things as lengths, volumes, and weights, that can be most easily arranged in this way. Wherein lies the dissimilarity, then, between the sensations produced by the stars of different magnitudes, or between tones of different loudness? Most of the investigators whose position we are examining offer no answer. They evidently suppose their

[15] *Tonpsychologie*, Vol. I, p. 122.

work is completed, whereas it is in fact but half finished. The appearance of offering a solution is gained by evading the issue.

Some, to be sure, assert quite boldly that the dissimilarities in question are differences in quality. This is indeed the sole alternative which they have left open to themselves. Nevertheless such a position seems to me the product of a desperate resolution. Nobody, of course, can define quality any more than he can define intensity. But when we speak of quality we mean such features of experience as red, green, sweet, sour. On the other hand, intensity connotes a constituent common to a multitude of experiences, visual, gustatory, auditory, and indeed to every variety of sensation, to pleasure and displeasure, and to the emotions. To call this common element quality, that is to say, to put it into the same class with red or sweet, seems completely meaningless.

### How Accurate Is the Measurement of Intensity Differences?

Whatever the precise nature of intensity may be, however, the fact remains that, in some sense of the term, intensity differences are recognized as intrinsically capable of measurement. We have now to inquire, "What grounds exist for confidence in the accuracy of this operation?" For the field of visual sensation I have already referred to the leading fact. There exists a practically complete consensus of expert opinion as to the relative intensities of sensations produced by thousands of stars. This statement, it must be understood, does not refer to the amount of physical energy which they send forth into space; for no measurements of this were ever attempted until the latter half of the eighteenth century, whereas the grading of brightnesses began before the Christian era. What I am referring to here is psychological, not physical phenomena. We are justified in the assertion, then, that the distance between the brightness of Sirius (magnitude —1.6) and Capella (magnitude 0.2) is equal to that between Capella and Dubhe (Alpha of Ursa Major, the brighter of the two pointers in the Great Dipper, magnitude 2.); and in consequence that the distance between the brightness of Sirius

and Dubhe is double that between the brightness of Sirius and Capella.

What is true of visual sensations holds in an eminent degree for sensations of sound. The leading authority on this subject, Professor Stumpf, writes as follows:

"As a matter of fact, direct judgments with regard to the intensity distances of sound sensations can be made with great precision. Of the truth of this assertion I have assured myself through the concurrent testimony of a number of persons. . . . If I set myself the task of passing from one intensity to another widely removed by a definite number of equal steps, for example six, the sounds being produced by knocking, I can form a fairly definite judgment as to whether I have succeeded or not; and this judgment will agree in most cases with that of another person. . . . In the production of music, judgments are formed by both auditor and performer with regard to the increase and decrease of intensity of tones, and that notwithstanding constant changes of pitch. Experience makes it possible to pass such judgments without reflection and with great rapidity. Trained auditors agree with reference to the greater or less excellence exhibited in the execution of a crescendo or a diminuendo." [16]

Is it possible to offer any proof of the actual equality of these steps apart from the agreement in the judgment of expert observers? The attempt has been made to solve this problem by finding a unit of measurement which could in some indirect fashion be shown to be unchanging, and then determining whether this unit was contained the same number of times in the distance from B to C as in that from A to B. Such a unit seems to offer itself in the just noticeable difference which Fechner proposed as the ultimate unit for measurements in this field. To the examination of its credentials an enormous amount of study has been devoted. As yet no complete agreement can be said to have been attained. But it is not too much to claim that within the past twenty years the majority of those who have worked on the problem have reached the conclusion that in fact just noticeable differences are equal, and that in equal appearing intervals there exists an equal number of just noticeable differences. If this position can be maintained intervals which appear equal may be regarded as equal in fact.[17]

[16] *Tonpsychologie,* Vol. I, p. 392.
[17] *Cf.* Titchener, *A Text-Book of Psychology,* pp. 216-217.

The conclusions which are justified by the preceding study seem to me to be as follows. In the first place intensities are numerically comparable in some sense of the term. In the second place, in those fields where it is possible to apply somewhat rigorous tests we find that relative intensities can be estimated under favorable conditions with a high degree of accuracy. How far this statement holds for pleasure and displeasure I can see no present means of determining experimentally, because objective tests of sensitivity are lacking. But I have no doubt that in the future some psychological laboratory will supply the desired information. In the meantime we can only judge by the data at present in our possession, that is to say, by what happens in the fields of vision and sound. If we can trust the analogy they supply we are certainly sufficiently equipped in this respect for most of the practical requirements of life.

### Application of the General Theory of Intensity Measurements to Pleasure and Displeasure

Our long excursion into the field of sense psychology has shown that the great majority of contemporary psychologists take one of two positions with regard to the intensity of conscious states. Both schools accept the possibility of a certain kind of measurement. They differ in that one (for whose position I have argued) would apply quantitative terms to differences in intensity in the most rigorous sense of the term *quantity;* the other (distinctly the majority) hold that differences in intensity represent relative distances on a scale as measured from a given starting point.

Turning to our own special problem, the possibility of applying quantitative terms to intensities of pleasure and displeasure, both views provide a place for such an operation. On either I may say, in the abstract, that the pleasurable or displeasurable aspects of any two experiences differ in intensity by so much. According to one interpretation this would mean that one pleasure has literally $n$ times the intensity of the other. On the alternative view I am justified in asserting only that it is $n$ steps or degrees more distant than the other from a certain point, say the zero of indifference.

If these two views are so intimately allied, does it make any practical difference which we accept? Perhaps not. But the problems raised when we seek to equate duration with intensity, as we must if we are to talk about amounts of pleasure, seem to be simpler if the first alternative can be accepted rather than the second. For if one intensity is literally twice as great as another, then a duration of one-half would really balance the higher intensity. On the second view, duration and intensity can be equated only on the assumption that where a given distance from the point of indifference has a certain intensity value, twice this distance would have twice the value. This assumption seems to me justifiable. But it may be open to the assaults of skepticism from which the first—once its premises are granted—is free.

Pleasure has two dimensions, as we may call them: intensity and duration. Intensity can be measured, as I have tried to show. Duration can be measured today with the greatest accuracy; although, as Wundt points out, in the early history of the race man "possessed only the vague ideas of 'earlier,' 'later,' and 'simultaneous,' parallel to those of 'less,' 'greater,' and 'equal' in the field of intensity." [18] There remains, however, one more question: "Can intensity be equated with duration in such a manner that a duration of one-half will balance a two-fold intensity?" I have just asserted that it can. But this has been denied. Dostoevsky has somewhere said that the pleasure felt at the onset of an epileptic attack is so intense that though it lasts but a second he would surrender a lifetime of ordinary pleasures for a single experience of this kind. This seems to be a preference for intensity to total quantity. If so, on what grounds could he be criticized for his choice?

It is clear that duration and intensity will be weighed on equal scales unless there is some cause which moves us to favor one at the expense of the other. I think it is possible to show that such a cause exists, that it operates to the advantage of intensity, and that it produces its effect through the imperfections with which it mirrors reality. This cause is the imagination. The imagination can picture intensity with relative ease, but is

[18] *Lectures on Human and Animal Psychology,* English translation, p. 19.

almost helpless when it attempts to represent duration. We see the effects of this incapacity all about us in that men who believe implicitly in Heaven and Hell may continue to do for years what they fully believe can end only in eternal damnation. With Macbeth (who was no skeptic like Omar) if they could but gain their ends here they'd "jump the life to come." This is partly because Hell is remote. But there is certainly another factor. When Jonathan Edwards succeeded through those marvelous sermons of his in making an eternity of suffering something of a reality he produced a profound and far-reaching reformation in manners—*as long as the impression lasted.*[19] Men are moved more by imagery than by concepts. In certain respects the former brings us nearer to reality; in certain other respects, the latter. But the former fails us most completely precisely in its power to represent duration. The fact, then, that some men have been so completely enslaved to the imagination as to declare a preference for intensity over duration as such seems to me quite irrelevant in determining their actual values. And no valid reason can be alleged, as far as I can discover, why either should be favored at the expense of the other.

## General Conclusions with Regard to the Hedonic Calculus

If numerical values can be attached to intensities, and intensity of pleasure can be equated with duration, the hedonic calculus is in principle a fact. For all the other elements that enter into it can, as we have seen, be stated in numerical terms. The actual computation of hedonic values is unquestionably subject to very great difficulties in the complicated situations which we are constantly meeting in everyday life. I have not dwelt upon them, partly because they are all too familiar to our experience, partly because they are set forth at sufficient length in Sidgwick's *Methods of Ethics*, Book II, Chapter III. What I feel justified in insisting upon, however, is the following facts: First, the computation of comparative amounts of pleasure is as such within the power of the human mind; and, second, as I have

[19] See in particular "The Eternity of Hell Torments," republished in Stedman and Hutchinson, *Library of American Literature*, Vol. II, p. 393.

tried to show earlier in this Chapter, it frequently takes place under such conditions as will warrant genuine confidence in the result.

By what mental machinery, so to speak, this computation is effected, I do not know, any more than I do in the case of other forms of quantitative judgment. Numerous investigations have shown that the marking of examination papers by a careful and intelligent examiner actually reveals a great deal, at least on the average, about the quantity and quality of a student's work. Nevertheless the process is a highly mysterious one. The grade placed opposite the answer just "emerges" from the depths of the mind, accompanied by a feeling of confidence which itself varies greatly in degree. Consider another type of judgment. Some people can estimate with almost perfect accuracy the lapse of time, and that not merely of short periods, where such vital processes as respiration supply a basis for calculation, but also of longer periods such as an hour or two hours, and that regardless of what may be occupying the mind.

In view of such facts as these I am not greatly disturbed when the opponents of Hedonism talk of the impossibility of judging whether one pleasure or displeasure is twice or three times that of another. People who know nothing about astronomy might say the same thing about the brightness of the stars. But even if it were literally true it would prove nothing. I can know that this pleasure is a very little, a little, considerably, much, very much more than that. The equating of this with the other value factors, such as duration, just as in marking the answers in a philosophy paper where there are a dozen excellences and defects to be evaluated, ordinarily goes on below the threshold of consciousness, and only the conclusion is thrust upward into the light of day.

It is possible that some readers, after plowing through the aridities of the preceding controversy, may ask what all this ado is about, and may be inclined to answer, "nothing." I believe, for my part, however, that the difficulties of this subject and thus the intricacies incident to its discussion show, as in numberless other instances, how inextricably intertwined are the everyday,

inevadable problems of practice and the most abstract conceptions of theory. Our problem has been: On what basis are choices to be made? The often heard answer sounds simple enough: "Choose the greater good." Immediately the question arises, "Do these words mean anything?" If you answer, "Yes," you have some serious theoretical difficulties on your hands. If "No," practical perplexities of the first importance begin to press upon you. For the question at once presents itself, "Is there any other criterion?" In the next section of this Chapter I shall review what I consider the most important attempts to find such a criterion and my conclusion will be that they are naught. Even if we should admit the existence of qualitative differences in values which are irreducible to quantitative, this would not meet the situation as a whole. For, as we have seen (Chapter IX, page 153) in the majority, probably the very great majority of our choices considerations of quality do not enter. Accordingly the human race seems to be placed before this dilemma: Either there exist quantitative differences in pleasure or else there is nothing better for us than a chaos of whims, prejudices, passing desires, the ebb and flow of emotion, passion, and satiety. We want, if possible, to rise superior to the workings of these blind forces within us. If we can not, whim, prejudice, fancy, become meaningless terms, because one impulse has no more authority than the other, since all are on the same plane. With this disappears all protection against the play of chance. If, on the other hand, we can find an intelligible meaning to the terms *greater* and *less amounts of pleasure* we have a standard by which to appraise values. It may be difficult to apply; but it exists none the less. And we can often approximately determine what are its demands. It gives us objectivity in the full sense. That is, it makes abstractly possible a comparison of the relative amount of good derivable from two courses of action, at least in our own case where the necessary data about likes and dislikes are directly accessible. And, making due allowances for undeveloped potentialities, the result may properly be declared to be either correct or incorrect. On any other view, as far as I can see, nothing remains to us but anarchy.

### Alternative Solutions: The Good as a Miscellaneous Lot of Desired Ends

If the preceding conclusions as to the possibility of hedonic measurement are rejected, what is the alternative? I propose to canvass the claims of those non-hedonic theories which appear to me to be most plausible. There are two in number.

The first view I shall examine holds that goods have no common content. They form a miscellaneous lot, of which pleasure may perhaps be one, whose only point of unity is their conformity to the definition of *good*. The good is thereupon identified with the attainment of desire. Where choice is necessary two roads are open to the representatives of this school. The greater or the preponderant good, or the good *par excellence*, may be equated with the object of choice. Or it may be defined as that which represents the realization of the maximum possible number of desires. For some moralists these two formulas might mean the same thing, but they need not do so, and I shall keep them apart.

The general theory of the good which underlies this position in both of its forms has already been criticized by implication in the preceding Chapter. My objections may be summarized in the following terms: (1) The representatives of this theory are bound in consistency to admit into their system of values ends of which the possessor can never be conscious, such as posthumous fame. On this view the reputation of Julius Cæsar as a great genius is valuable to him at this moment. (2) They do not distinguish between the bare attainment of the desired end and the obtaining of satisfaction in connection with its attainment. (3) They do not distinguish between ends according to the duration of the satisfaction produced by their attainment. In fact they seem to give as little attention to the value of an end after it has once been attained as does the average play-goer to the life of the lover after he has succeeded in winning the girl. Attainment is supposed to be everything—or rather no supposition whatever is entertained as to what comes after it. (4) Finally they leave equivocal the value of a state which, though it might have been desired if it had been thought of, actually

entered consciousness without having been an object of desire, and which gives pleasure, as the sight or odor of flowers, or the singing of the wind in the pine tops.

Such are my general objections to this theory in any of its formulations. Their specific application to the doctrine that the good is everywhere identical with the actual object of choice is obvious enough. For the sake of concreteness of treatment, however, I shall examine in their light one or two situations which seem to me to supply a crucial test of its adequacy. On this view, it is to be remembered, the highest or most complete good attainable by you at any given time consists in the possession of what you have chosen, provided all the factors of the situation were before your mind at the time of choice. The only ground on which you could regret a past choice of your own would be the later irruption of some unforeseen factor into the field. This sounds broad and tolerant, and since our generation is nothing if not broad and tolerant we may predict for this view a great run with the public if they should ever hear of it. But it has in my opinion a fatal flaw. It ignores the overwhelming influence upon the will of the "present" (*i. e.*, the immediate future) as compared with the interests of next week, next month, or next year.

In Chapter XXIII, page 479 and following, will be found a list of choices every one of which it would have to pronounce good, for in each the agent expresses his will as it takes shape at the moment of action. Let us examine one or two of these incidents with a little care. In George Gissing's story a man sells himself into slavery for two or three long years in order that he may have the momentary satisfaction of repelling an insult on the part of a perfect stranger whom he will never see again. Surely there is nothing final about such a decision. The vulgar fellow is immediately before him; his blood boils; he wants to feel his own superiority; the future grows dim before his eyes. Hence the hastily formed resolution. Similarly in John Hay's account of the Spanish married couple who were too proud to make up a petty quarrel. It is very difficult for some people to admit themselves in the wrong. But if such a person has once brought himself to the sticking point, he may rejoice to have done so all his life, and severely condemn the weakness and obstinacy of

the past self which sacrificed goods of the highest value in order to be saved a few moments of self-humiliation. I speak from experience. To treat such decisions as those which form the center of these incidents as beyond criticism is to put on the same plane the slave of the imagination who must follow the appeal of what he is capable of picturing and can follow no other, with the type of mind for whom the abstractly conceived interests of the future are capable of supplying vigorous and tenacious motives of action. Indeed the view that the chosen is *ipso facto* good, looks to me like the last resource of a moralist *in extremis*. He apparently adopts it because he can think of no alternative. And while he may accept it in the abstract he will, I think, be found denying it in detail, unless he is so different from his fellow human beings as to represent a separate species of his own. At least I have given my list of choices in Chapter XXIII to several hundred persons and have found no one as yet who did not agree that they were all unreasonable.

The other form of this theory proposes to treat our desires as units and finds the preponderant good in the attainment of the end set by the majority of those which are called into action by the situation. But the difficulties of the hedonic calculus are as child's play compared with the weighing of the comparative value of desires. The simplest plan would be to have every desire count for one and no desire for more than one. But this proposal ignores very important differences in intensity; we want some things very much more than we want others. And it can not for a moment be successfully maintained that the attainment of desires A and B is necessarily a greater good than the attainment of C. Again the temporal aspect of attainment simply can not be overlooked (see objection "3" above), and this introduces a new factor into the calculation. Finally, desires can not be kept apart and counted like dimes. They tend to form a system in which the original desires become absorbed and replaced by the desire for the object of the system as such. Any representative of this philosophy of value, therefore, who criticizes Hedonism on the ground of the difficulties involved in the calculus of pleasure, needs to be reminded that people who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.

### Alternative Solutions: Perfectionism

The second of the alternative theories which I have planned to examine may be called Perfectionism. It finds the good of man in a single concrete end. This end is the perfection of personality, or what in Chapter XVIII was called "self-realization." All the varied goods of life are treated as worthless in themselves; they are valuable only as they serve to promote the one supreme purpose.

This theory of value has been given a broader and a narrower form. The first recognizes as a good all elements of personality which are capable of arousing admiration or making one man immediately attractive to another or to himself. The second confines the good to a single element of personality, namely, character. It will be convenient to begin with the latter.

This view goes back to the fourth century B. C. when it was formulated by Antisthenes, one of the pupils of Socrates. With some later changes it became famous as the ethical doctrine of Stoicism, and from 300 B. C. to the break-up of the Roman Empire divided with Epicureanism, a form of Egoistic Utilitarianism, the allegiance of a large proportion of the educated classes of the Mediterranean world. After having suffered a long eclipse Stoicism has regained a certain prominence in contemporary ethical controversy because it reappears in some passages of T. H. Green's *Prolegomena to Ethics,* a work which a generation ago exercised a tremendous influence on British ethical thinking.

The fundamental weakness of Stoicism is so obvious and has been exposed so often that apart from its revival by Green and his school the theory has long ceased to attract any considerable number of moralists. If we ask the Stoic what he means by character or virtue he will tell us that it consists in the pursuit of the good. What then is the good? The answer is character. Green thought he could help matters by defining character as the pursuit of the good of others, and the good of others as character. But the difficulty obviously remains just where it was before. This is, in fact, another case of the inhabitants of the

famous island who earned their living by taking in each other's washing.

To present the difficulty through the medium of a concrete illustration: Does the unlimited development of the power to bear physical pain represent an end at which it is desirable for us to aim, to such an extent that we ought to seek to obtain it at whatever cost? The Hedonist's answer is in principle quite definite. Everyone needs a certain amount of will power. A man must be able at all times to control any impulse, give up any pleasure, uproot any habit which he finds in conflict with a more valuable good for himself or any others who may have a claim upon him. Since the good is defined in terms of pleasure there is here no definition in a circle. Christian and Hindu asceticism offer an equally clear answer. Train the will to undergo the maximum of suffering and deprivation compatible with living out your appointed number of days. This amounts to saying that the end is the maximum attainable amount of pain. But Stoicism has no answer except that pain is not an evil, just as pleasure is not a good. Accordingly, the measure of pain which it thinks we ought to bear and to train ourselves to endure, drifts helplessly back and forth between the standard of Hedonism and that of Asceticism, with no place to rest because there is no real criterion. The reference to others' character affords no guidance because the consideration of others' capabilities in this direction is as completely compatible with the ascetic extreme as with the moderate position of Hedonism. If the unlimited power voluntarily to bear pain, the product of years of self-laceration, is good for me why should I not regard it as a good for everyone else? And every act of self-torture on my part helps to create an atmosphere in which self-torture on the part of others will flourish also. The question thus recurs: "Is the possession of the kind of will which years of self-torture can alone produce an end to be striven for?" The answer actually given depends upon the taste of the individual Perfectionist.

Another difficulty is presented by the clash with the ordinary layman's views of value which is neither adequately explained or justified by Stoicism. According to this theory affection or love, for example, is a good only if it serves as a means to the

development of character. Your wife, children, intimate friends, are valuable only as so many Swedish horses through which to work up your moral muscle. Has one of your children died? That is a calamity or not to you only in so far as it has affected your character for better or worse. The truth of such notions is certainly not self-evident. And I am acquainted with no Stoic who has ever succeeded in offering any real defense of them.

Some writers have thought to improve matters by broadening the formula and making it read: "The harmonious development of all our powers, both of intellect, emotion, and will." But here we face not only one difficulty, but a score. What powers of the intellect shall I develop and to what extent each? I can train myself to fair expertness in the art of the "lightning calculator," if I have a good memory for figures. I can cultivate the power of doing sums in addition and reciting poetry at the same time. I can develop the power and contract the habit of punning, *etc., etc.* Then there are the intellectual-muscular tricks, the guidance of the muscles to perform astonishing feats through the combined guidance of the intellect and the will; standing on one toe, like a ballet girl, walking a tight rope, or performing the unbelievable trapeze stunts upon which we gaze with unfailing admiration every time we take our children to the circus. Doubtless no representative of this school recommends these things. But why not? The same difficulties reappear in the fields of emotion and desire. The stock phrase, "the harmonious development of our powers," will give us no help. *Harmonious* is almost the slipperiest word in the English language. It might perhaps be interpreted as consistent. But this term, as we have seen, means the persistent application of a principle, or the continued exercise of the same spirit. So the question recurs: "What is the principle or what the spirit, adherence to which constitutes the good?"

The faults of this view are essentially the same as those of Stoicism. It is able to supply no criterion of its own for the determination of what should be developed and what not; what shall have the first chance of being developed, and what the second. It also looks at life from what may be called the Swedish horse point of view. I shall find the worth of affection, if not as an instrument for the development of character, then as one for

the development of my capacity to be affectionate; and this latter, if I am consistent, can supply me with the only valid reason for indulging in this emotion. I must seek to alleviate pain whether that of a dog, a child, or my neighbor, not because the pain makes any difference, but because I am better off for the possession of sensitiveness to pain (though if the pain is not an evil, I do not see why I should be sensitive about it).

As a matter of fact it is easy enough to see where the members of this school get their criterion, or rather their criteria, for they use several intertwined in inextricable confusion. There is the Hedonistic, particularly with reference to displeasure. This is mixed with the stage view of life. Finally there enters as a third ingredient, delight in congeniality of taste and interest, with its demand that others shall shape their lives so as to afford me this form of gratification. Which of these factors shall predominate at a given time seems to be primarily a matter of the interaction of temperament and mood. So that when the Perfectionist takes to writing on ethics the result is apt to be a production containing a large admixture of autobiography presented under the guise of an objective delineation of human life.

### The Limits of the Hedonic Calculus

Granting the possibility of estimating relative amounts of pleasure we must recognize the existence of limits beyond which such computations can not be made with sufficient accuracy to serve as a reliable guide to action. In particular, as the differences between the pleasure values of any two courses of conduct become smaller, the difficulties of the calculation increase until finally any real comparison becomes impossible. In such a situation we can frequently simplify our problem by ignoring the factor of intensity. This means, as far as the immediate experience itself is concerned, confining our attention to duration, which it is often comparatively easy to estimate. We employ a similar device in every department of practice, and whatever the immediate end in view may happen to be. "If the general in ordering a march," writes Sidgwick, "or the physician in recommending a change of abode, took into consideration all the circumstances

that were at all relevant to the end sought, their calculations would become impracticable." [20]

When in despair at our impotence in the face of inescapable choices whose outcome lies beyond the range of our powers of computation, we may find consolation in noting that under certain conditions the more complex the problem, the less difference does it make which alternative we accept. If our difficulties in forming a decision turn on the paucity of our data, as when a general orders a charge in essential ignorance of the enemy's strength, then we are merely gambling and must recognize the possibility of being overwhelmed with a gambler's fate. But often our perplexity turns on fullness of data rather than poverty. Both courses display all their attractions, but we do not know how to strike the balance between them. In such cases we may comfort ourselves with the reflection that precisely in proportion as the decision is difficult is it likely to be unimportant, since if the difference in value between the two can not be estimated it can hardly be very great.

Pleasures, accordingly, can be weighed when all the relevant data are before the mind and either the difference between the two alternatives is considerable in amount, or the problem can be simplified without serious consequences by ignoring some recalcitrant factor. On the other hand, where the pleasurableness of two courses of action promises to be approximately the same, we need not care very much which we choose. But there are other situations which do not fall into any of these categories, situations in which we know not which way to turn, and yet where we can not be at all sure that the results in terms of pleasure will be much the same whatever the course we take. What are we to do under such circumstances? Obviously the only course remaining open is to form as clear a conception as lies within our power of the consequences, in terms of pleasure and displeasure, of each alternative under consideration, and if circumstances permit, to dwell on them for a considerable length of time. It is dangerous to picture concrete scenes too vividly in the imagination. For just as the imagination awakens a dis-

[20] *The Methods of Ethics*, 7th Edition, p. 131.

proportionate interest in the experiences of this afternoon as compared with those of next month, so it loads the scales in favor of intensity which it can represent as against duration which it can not. We are therefore to use conceptual thought rather than imagery, but thought as detailed and concrete as we are able to make it. Under such circumstances sooner or later a decision has a way of emerging into consciousness. Does it represent a correct solution of the problem? Often we can not tell at the time; sometimes we never discover. But whatever it may be worth, it represents the best which our poor, short-sighted minds are competent to achieve. Incapable of untangling the knot, we cut it, knowing that to fail to act would be to act. In other words, it is impossible to rationalize the whole of life. But this of course is no excuse for not going as far as we can.

Fortunately, perhaps, much of life lies outside the region of choice, not merely in the sense that necessity in some form hems each one of us in on every side, but also in the sense that a single volition often carries with it thousands of others. This holds for marriage and the choice of a vocation, the two most important decisions of a man's life. It applies also, though somewhat less rigorously, to the formation of an intimate friendship, to the adoption of a certain scale of household expenditure, to the actions which develop into habits of living, and much else. Fortunately also, the most important features of the moral code and also of the code of individual prudence are based upon principles so broad in their application that he who is willing to look at the situation with genuine impartiality can usually determine correctly what he ought to do. To be sure we can never tell with absolute certainty what will happen. Some years ago a man bought stock in a gold mine of whose value he knew practically nothing and has been drawing dividends of 75 per cent per annum ever since. But we ought to be guided, both in relation to our fellows and in relation to the conduct of our personal life, by probabilities. And the fundamental laws both of morality and prudence represent the age-long experience of the race as to the usual consequences of human conduct. Especially in such matters as keeping my hands off my neighbor's property, living up to my agreements, and in general practising integrity

and fair dealing there enters a factor—the widespread system of indirect effects, effects upon my own character and the character of others, effects upon the security, vigor, and in the end the very existence of society—which precisely because of its generality balances the plus and minus of individual instances and under most circumstances guides us in safety to the probabilities upon which we are bound to act.

### What Kind of a Life Does Hedonism Demand?

According to some of its opponents, Hedonism recommends a life of luxury or even debauchery as the chief good of man. To them it means the exclusive pursuit of the pleasures of the senses, omitting, curiously enough, those of sight and hearing. One reason for this misunderstanding is doubtless to be found in the popular signification of the term "pleasure-seeker." For some persons are apparently quite incapable of getting away from the linguistic usage of the world about them, and if they were consistent to the end would hold that the sun goes round the earth since everyone uses the terms sunrise and sunset. But whatever the causes of their opinion it has no relationship with the actual teachings of Hedonists. For no one who is at all acquainted with life, whatever his theories of value, can imagine for an instant that any considerable amount of pleasure can be obtained through the satisfaction of the lower senses. One fact, if no other, stands forever in the way of any such possibility. The pleasures due to this source can never occupy more than an insignificant fraction of our time; and where, as with the Romans at their banquets, an attempt is made to break over the narrow boundaries inexorably set by nature, the voluptuary subjects himself to the law of the dulling of sensibility through repetition and loses more than he gains.

What kind of a life Hedonism actually does demand I have tried to show in Chapter XVIII. The goods there enumerated can rest their claims upon the fact that their attainment is less dependent upon the chance play of external circumstances than any of their serious rivals for favor; that they are more permanent in duration and more fruitful of new values; further, that for those to whom they mean most their highest manifestations

bring the most unalloyed and the most intense experiences of joy open to the human race. In so far as a man is indifferent to any one of these values it is assuredly not a good for him. None the less his life is just so much the poorer for his blindness and so much the more vulnerable to the onsets of *ennui* with its multiform consequences. Furthermore the power of appreciation could probably be developed more or less successfully in almost any direction by the great majority of intelligent persons if they would but give themselves the trouble; so that what is an actual good to some may be a potential good to most or all. A life passed in devotion to the best ends is not merely a precious possession in itself, it may also be an attractive spectacle to the onlooker. This certainly does not constitute its value to the agent, except indirectly in that it may serve to satisfy the demands of approbativeness. But if he cares for the attractiveness of grace, and charm, and broad horizons in the world of human nature he will find an enduring satisfaction in the progressive realization of an ideal of beauty in his own life. Such a man has always before him an unattained goal, and thus something for which to strive and hope. He of all men can most appreciate love and best awaken it in others. If, then, those who most completely realize the possibilities of human existence "live by admiration, hope, and love," he truly lives.*

* See Notes, XX, "Some Criticisms of Hedonism," p. 522.

## Chapter XXI

# THE GOOD AND THE RIGHT

### The Moral Judgment as a Whole Involves a Judgment of Right and a Judgment of Good

The moral judgment which pronounces a volition right or wrong is really a fusion of two judgments. In its eudemonic form (1) it asserts that a certain "state of things," regarded as attainable, is valuable or good. (2) It locates the good, affirming that it is right—or wrong—that A should possess it. If a good is within the reach of A, the pursuit of it on his part can be wrong, according to the doctrine of this book, only because it is incompatible with some greater good, whether of A himself, or some other individual, or individuals, or group of individuals.

The eudemonic judgment is passed upon conduct most frequently when a conflict exists between two incompatible goods, or two inevitable evils, or a good and an evil bound together in a union which no available forces can dissolve. This situation invites the mind to determine who has the better claim to the good or to exemption from the evil. The eudemonic judgment can of course be applied to conduct where interests do not conflict. We may approve, for example, of the care which a healthy and vigorous mother joyfully gives to her infant; or again, the friendliness with which a pedestrian, without any trouble on his part, directs an inquiring stranger to the university library. But for obvious reasons the idea of rightness is more likely to occur to the mind where an act involves a sacrifice of someone's interests. I do not mean that under such circumstances the judge, in pronouncing judgment, necessarily balances gain against loss. He may, for example, see only one side of the situation. What I wish to point out is that precisely in so far as a benevolent judge includes in his view all the relevant data, he will find in the great majority of cases that the problem of right involves

the weighing of competing claims to good or exemption from evil.

The dysdemonic judgment is not normally concerned with a conflict between the interests of A and B. That is to say it seldom, if ever, seeks to determine whether it shall be A or B who is to be punished, but simply whether A should be made to suffer under given conditions. The judgment is, however, still a judgment of location. It answers the question, "Who shall be made to suffer?" by pointing to someone that has previously wronged his neighbor or the community.

We may summarize by saying that the judgment of good answers the question, "What?", the judgment of right, the question, "Who?" The first asks, "What is worth possessing?"; the second, "Who has a claim?" or in case of conflict, "the better claim to possess it?" The first again, "What is to be avoided or escaped from?" the second, "To whom, if anyone, should the evil be allotted?"

### The Final Formula for the Standard of Right

Our determination of the content of the good as constituted by pleasure supplies us with a somewhat more definite formulation of the standard of right than was possible in Chapter VIII. Substituting pleasure for good we have the following result. That act is outwardly right which produces the greatest amount of pleasure attainable under the circumstances under consideration; or which, if a net sum of displeasure is unavoidable, produces the minimum possible amount. The aim to produce such a state of things is inwardly right, or right in the proper and moral sense of the term. It may be objected that few people about us seem to take so comprehensive a point of view in forming their judgments. This may well be a fact. The possibility that there is some other act which might be better frequently fails to occur to our minds. The same thing may happen with regard to our amusements. Some form of amusement suggests itself for a leisure hour. We often act upon it without asking ourselves whether there may not be some alternative which would be more entertaining. But the narrowness of the human mind is one thing; the course which it must pursue if it is to solve its

problems with exactness and completeness is another thing. It is often impracticable to survey all the possibilities because there is not sufficient time. In this case the unconsidered possibilities become impossible, if the limitations imposed by time are taken into account, as they ought to be. This understood, we can only say that the more completely our survey of a situation exhausts its possibilities the more likely are we to discover what course is outwardly right under the given conditions; and accordingly, what aim the agent ought to set before himself in acting.

### The Sources of Error in Moral Judgment

We are now for the first time in a position to make a complete enumeration of the sources of error in moral judgments. Moral judgments, as we have just seen, contain two components, an assertion of value, and a locating of this value. In the latter (the moral judgment in the narrower sense of the term, or the judgment of right) there enter two factors, desire and intellect. The desires, as we have abundantly seen, are desires for the good of self and others; desire for the harm of others, and occasionally of self. The causes of error in the eudemonic judgments, in so far as error is due to the nature of our desires, have been presented with sufficient fullness in Chapter VIII. Benevolence, in its relation to a given person or given persons, may be too weak; or when considerations such as individual or family welfare enter, relatively, at least, too strong. In other words, there may be indifference or "favoritism" (Chapter VIII, page 126). Malevolence, if it determines our judgment, is always too strong.

The rôle of the intellect, while covered by implication in earlier Chapters, calls for more detailed consideration. Thought enters into the judgment of right in two ways. In all desire there is the idea of a "state of things," and also the idea of some person or persons as its actual or possible possessor. Desire consists in such an idea and an attitude of welcome or the reverse towards the state of things which this idea represents. Thus the moral judgment (which represents the way we desire people to will) can not make its appearance in the ascending order of mental life till the capacity for conceptual thought has come into existence.

This conclusion is of the greatest importance for a theory of moral evolution.

But thought enters into the moral judgment in a second way which more intimately concerns our present inquiry. I refer to the power to perceive identities and differences. We remember that a valid standard represents a self-consistent whole. Hence when the layman discovers contradictions in his judgments he recognizes that one or the other must be either withdrawn or modified. Now consistency means, as we have seen, feeling or desiring in the same way about the same things. Accordingly the challenge of consistency always reads as follows: "Are the two 'things' under scrutiny identical or different?" When we reflect upon moral issues, therefore, we often settle the questions they raise by determining whether the doubtful case is like or different from another concerning which we regard our conviction as final.

The arguments about the rightness or wrongness of volitions which we hear all about us are often, perhaps usually, of this kind. King David sees no harm in having Bathsheba's husband killed and marrying the widow. But later he perceives the essential identity of his act with that of the rich man who seized his neighbor's lamb. Many persons think it quite innocent for Mr. Gye to persuade Miss Wagner to break her contract with Mr. Lumley (Chapter VIII, page 119) till they discover that his act involves the same principle as Lieutenant Becker's murder of an inconvenient fellow-citizen by hiring gunmen to do the job for him.

The employment of the principle of consistency introduces nothing fundamentally new into the content of the moral code. For consistency is not a creative factor; it is, as has already been said, persistency in maintaining a certain attitude, and this attitude must exist before it can persist. The bare operation of the logical faculty can thus extend a preëxisting standard to new fields where it properly belongs; it can destroy the credit of invalid standards, as has been abundantly shown in Chapter VIII. But it is entirely incapable of adding any item of its own creation to the fundamental precepts of morality.

The preceding account supplies the solution of the problem

from which we set out, the place of the intellect, in the sense of the power of identification and discrimination, in creating mistaken moral judgments. As the intellect can make identifications and distinctions which represent fact, so it can make false identifications and false distinctions and fail to see real ones. Illustrations of the failure to see real identities are those just given: David immediately before the visit of Nathan; many students, in their attitude towards Lumley *vs.* Gye before they are shown the same principle at work in the Becker affair. Additional ones, if needed, are the following: Disapproval of a man who lures another into a den of thieves where his pockets will be picked, and acquiescence in the publication by a newspaper of advertisements known by it to be fraudulent; condemnation of overt murder, coupled with the failure to condemn manufacturers who refuse to guard dangerous machinery till compelled to do so by law. Examples of false identification are: Condemnation of Jean Valjean's theft because of its superficial resemblance to ordinary stealing; justification of the administration of an overdose of morphine to a cancer patient on the ground that you would find no fault with a man who should treat his dog in the same way if it were in the same condition. On page 303 of Chapter XV will be found a somewhat more elaborate illustration; and the paradoxes of the Doctrine of Natural Rights, displayed in that Chapter, belong in precisely the same category.

A third source of variations in moral judgments is supplied by judgments of value. Whether we can here speak of *errors* we shall consider in the next paragraph. It is obvious that the judgments of two persons might agree in that, whether explicitly or implicitly, they were based upon the principle of the primacy of the greater pleasure, and yet might differ in outcome in that each judge had a different conception of what constituted the greater pleasure. An illustration of this statement is supplied by the different estimates attached to affection between husband and wife in primitive society and our own. If such affection is regarded as one of the most precious of goods, and if prenuptial chastity and postnuptial fidelity are regarded as the most effective safeguards of such affection, then one system of morals will

prevail; that, namely, which the European races profess, and many of its members are seeking to preserve and promote. On the other hand, if, as among many primitive peoples, affection between husband and wife is either unknown, or where it exists is undervalued, this particular reason for maintaining such a code will never occur to the mind, or will be allowed to lapse into a position of secondary importance.

How far these variations in conceptions of value represent mistakes in judgment has already been considered in Chapter XVIII, page 391. There actually is some course of action which will lead each person to the attainment of the maximum amount of pleasure attainable for him, given his mental, emotional, and volitional capacities, latent and operant, whether native or acquired, and given the circumstances in which he finds himself. And such a course—still considering his interests without reference to others'—would be objectively right. But in the case of a person of different tastes and interests another line of action on the part of self or others might be right. For example, it might be the duty of the parents of one youth, if they knew all the facts, to develop his musical interests; it might be sheer cruelty to attempt it for another. Thus some course is always actually right; but in so far as differences of tastes and interests are a material factor in the decision, it is not necessarily the same course for different persons, or even for the same person at different periods of his life. This statement does not involve a lapse into subjectivity. It merely recognizes the rightness of treating different persons differently where there is a difference in the needs and interests to be served.

It would be as foolish, however, to exaggerate the amount of this differentiation as to ignore it. The fundamental wants of civilized men are largely the same; and even the differences between those of civilized and uncivilized man are much less than a superficial glance at the life of the latter might lead one to suppose. Thus there is a body of moral rules common to the race which are binding upon everyone under ordinary conditions because they ordinarily represent the course of conduct which will yield the result at which all genuinely moral actions aim.

### The Objects of Desire

In order to understand fully the significance of the judgment of value we must recognize explicitly, as was pointed out on page 396 of Chapter XIX, that other things besides the good, or as we may now say, pleasure, may be the object of desire. Human desires, in fact, can be divided into three classes. The desire for pleasure, the desire for displeasure, and the anhedonic desires. The desire for the pleasure of self is egoism, the desire for the pleasure of others is altruism. The trunk from which these two branches spring we have called benevolence. Again we may desire the harm or displeasure of others, and we may under exceptional circumstances desire displeasure for self. These are the two forms of what we have called malevolence. Anhedonic desires are such as the desire for power and the desire to communicate our ideas to others. They are called anhedonic, not because their attainment does not result in pleasure, for it usually does, but because the idea which arouses them is not the expectation of either pleasure or displeasure.

Actions from anhedonic desires are as little egoistic or altruistic as are actions from malevolence. In themselves they are no more a proper object of praise or blame than is winking or sneezing, for the moral judgment concerns itself exclusively with a man's attitude towards the good. But indirectly they may come under the jurisdiction of morality, after all. When your roommate insists upon talking to you although he knows perfectly well that you want to study, he may in fact be merely "exploding"; but if he had a proper amount of altruism he would feel enough concern for your good to put an extinguisher upon his desire. The same is true when a man babbles too much of his own affairs in obedience to the same imperious impulse; he does not think, or else he does not care, for the moment, about the welfare of his tomorrow's self. The whole process is beautifully exhibited in the incipient stages of drunkenness. When we blame such actions, then, we do it on precisely the same basis as that on which we blame actions from inadvertence (Chapter IV, page 58). If you are justified, for example, in calling your talka-

tive room-mate selfish it is not because he cares so much for his own good that he is willing to sacrifice yours in pursuing it, but rather because he is so indifferent to yours that he lets his impulses carry him to a point where they will clash with it. The principle is the same as forbearing to control a sneeze which is likely to wake up a baby and give a tired mother an hour's labor in putting it to sleep again.

I must add, however, that I am inclined to believe that action from pure anhedonic desire is a somewhat exceptional phenomenon in the life of a normal adult member of a civilized race. In the abstract it seems perfectly possible. It is in like manner possible to hear a noise without either referring it to some object or wondering whence it came. But such a state of mind is presumably rare. So, I fancy, is the parallel phenomenon in the field of volition. Our anhedonic desires, it seems to me, get a not inconsiderable part of their drive from the fact that an unsatisfied desire may be an unpleasant, sometimes an extremely unpleasant companion. While a smaller, but still appreciable portion of their force may come from the expectation that attainment will bring, as it in fact ordinarily does, a certain measure of satisfaction.

The pleasure value is likely to be still more clearly before our eyes when we act to further the anhedonic desires of others, whenever such action means sacrifice on our part. My son, for example, desires knowledge, or at least claims to. If the costs of acquisition are to be paid out of my pocketbook I am likely to consider rather carefully whether the knowledge will do him any good, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, before I agree to send him to college and pay the bills.

### The Rôle of Benevolence in the Regulation of Human Conduct

The preceding discussion has prepared the way for a more complete view than I have as yet presented of the rôle of benevolence—that is to say of egoism and altruism—in the regulation of human conduct. As the desire for what is worth while, or pleasure, it tends to make us scrutinize all forms of action with a view to determining their worth, and to inhibit those which

are in any way hostile to its aims:—instincts, in so far as they can be brought into subjection to the will, the expressions of the emotions, ideo-motor action, malevolence, and the anhedonic desires. As against these it raises the question, when it is fully awake, *"Cui bono?"*—"What will be the value of the act or the state of things which the action will bring about?" It includes, as will be remembered, the desire for concrete goods, that is, definite experiences, occurring at a given time, on through various gradations to the most abstract ends, such as money, health, education, strength of character.*

Benevolence, as we have just seen, in its capacity as egoism, sets us upon examining or criticizing our desires with a view to determining their value in terms of pleasure. It further supplies the impulse which sets us comparing the value of the different courses of action open to us at any one time, thus making possible harmonious coöperation between them. Finally, it interests us in looking about to discover whether there may not be other alternatives just out of sight around the corner in addition to those which may happen to be in plain view; and as one form of this procedure, arouses us to the task of developing in ourselves latent interests in order that our life may be thereby enriched. And what egoism prompts us to do for self, altruism tends to lead us to do with reference to others.

Where an impartial benevolence controlled fully not merely the judgments but also the actions of men it would convert all life into the consistent pursuit of values whether for self or others. In its complete absence life would cease to be controlled by any idea of the good, whether in the immediate or remote future, whether for self or others. A warring group of lawless impulses, blind to every consideration but their own urge, would seize the reins of government and drag us hither and thither as one or another happened to be dominant for the moment. The consequences would be anarchy with its train of failures and suffering. The ship would be sailing without a pilot; the army going into battle without a commander-in-chief. Benevolence is thus not one desire among others, except in the sense that the commanding general is one soldier among others. Its function

*See Notes, XXI, "Reflective and Unreflective Benevolence," p. 526.

is that of supreme supervision and control because it represents everywhere the good. In the impersonal form which it assumes in the moral ideal it stands for the good of the whole against any one rebellious part. It is thus the central factor in the life of man.

### Might Morality Have Been Fundamentally Different from What It Is?

If the environment had been different at any point when the ancestors of man or man himself was coming into existence, might not our moral consciousness have been fundamentally different from what it is? This question is inevitably suggested by the theory of evolution. The answer is that, as we have seen, morality has its source in the very roots of our being, not in some superficial element of our nature which might have been different without affecting anything else, like the capacity for seeing red and green, which are absent without very serious consequences in the ordinary color-blind man. Accordingly without at least some rudiments of the desire for good which is the source of the moral ideal we should not be human beings at all. Conditions are easily conceivable which would have prevented any such creature as man from appearing on the earth. Our notion that if Mars is capable of supporting life it must contain some form of life like our own is extremely naïve. But if a being that could properly be called man appears anywhere in the universe he will possess at least the germs of benevolence. For a creature capable of living without any idea of and interest in the good, whether of self or another, would be so different from ourselves that there would be no meaning in including us both in the same class. There may accordingly be a world entirely devoid of morality. The animal kingdom below man, or at any rate the greater part of it, supplies an obvious example. But a morality built after a pattern fundamentally different from our own is a form of words to which it is impossible to attach any definite meaning.

# *Book III*

# SELF-SACRIFICE

## Chapter XXII

# IS SELF-SACRIFICE NECESSARY?

The moral judgment directs us what to do when interests are in irreconcilable conflict. It demands, as we have seen, that the less interest be sacrificed for the sake of the greater. The alternative, of course, would be the sacrifice of the greater to the less. Whichever alternative is chosen loss is inevitable and this is a misfortune. The spirit of morality itself, which demands that the good exist, demands that it exist as abundantly as possible. It can be perfectly satisfied only with complete harmony. Now it is a not uncommon experience to discover that a supposed incompatibility of interests is, as a matter of fact, quite imaginary. This suggests the question: "Is there any real conflict between human interests, or may it not be true that if we would either look beneath the surface and see what is there, or exercise a little ingenuity in shifting things about, we should find harmony the universal law of life?"

### The Problem Stated

We have here, in reality, not one problem, but several. I shall, however, confine myself to a single aspect of the subject and inquire whether the attainment of a man's personal interests in the largest possible measure is compatible with that regard on his part for other people's interests which the moral ideal prescribes. This is the famous problem, broached at the beginning of European ethics by the philosopher Socrates, concerning the relation between virtue and individual happiness.

The word *virtue,* as we remember, is ambiguous. It may mean either action from loyalty to the moral ideal or action from mere external conformity. The honest man, in the proper sense of that term, is one that is moved either by the spirit of service, or the desire for perfection of character. On the other hand,

there are men who act honestly, for example pay their debts and refrain from stealing the money confided to their care, solely because they are afraid of the penitentiary, or because they think they will make more money in the long run by so acting than by the opposite course. Accordingly, before we are in a position to examine the relation between virtue and happiness we must first ask: "Do you mean by virtuous action loyalty or conformity?"

Now the relationship of external conformity to personal welfare offers a perfectly legitimate field for investigation. We might ask, for example, whether honesty is the best policy. We should thereby be inquiring whether certain external acts, whether done from the highest or the lowest motives, pay in coin which is current with the honest and the dishonest alike, for example, in cold cash. We might ask again whether it is worth while to gain control of a bad temper, regardless of the motives which impel one to the conquest, and reckoning the reward once more in terms of what appeals to the good and the bad man alike. Much has been said on this subject which has a good deal of value. But I do not intend to consider it. The only question which I shall discuss is the following: "Is the man who does right out of loyalty to the moral ideal the happier for his loyalty?"

We shall have to begin our inquiry by distinguishing between two sources of happiness. As we saw in Chapter XVIII, page 391 and following, the value of any possession depends upon a man's tastes and interests. The attainment of fame or the opportunity to hear great music will be a source of happiness primarily to him who desires fame or loves music. Precisely the same thing is true of moral loyalty, in the sense either of the spirit of service or the desire for perfection of character. The loyal man has sources of happiness open to him which are forever closed to the man (if such there be) who has neither generous impulses nor a sense of personal honor. Inner devotion, in other words, may bring with it certain rewards which affect the good man solely because he has the desires which make him a good man. On the other hand it may also bring with it certain rewards which appeal to men, independently of what their character may be. In the following we shall study both kinds of rewards. But we shall

have to do one thing more. The desire for fame or the love of music may bring penalties of its own in its train as well as rewards. The same thing may be true of moral loyalty. In surveying the field as a whole, therefore, we shall have to take account of its penalties as well as its rewards. With this understanding of the factors involved we return to our question: "Is the man possessed of moral loyalty the happier because he possesses it?"

### A Criticism of Certain Popular Misconceptions

A complete answer would require a criticism of a vulgar delusion and of a once almost universal error. The delusion is that happiness is something that can be divided up and passed around like cake, so that the larger one person's share, the less is left for the others. This notion of a necessary antagonism between the interests of different persons has only to be squarely faced to be seen to be untenable. It will be considered in detail as we proceed. The error, which has at last largely disappeared from ethics and sociology, is that man is some sort of an independent entity, with a nature definable apart from the society in which he lives. But this notion is absurd. A "wild boy of Pindus" is in no sense a human being.[1] And the great majority of both the sorrows and the joys which may fall to the lot of man are for him a sealed book. If, then, man is a member of an organism, endowed by Nature with an intellectual and volitional equipment fitting him for the place he is destined to occupy in such an organism, it will not be surprising if a life of complete and absolute selfishness turns out to be as well-nigh impossible and, in so far as it is actually approximated to, as wretched a thing as the life of a slave of passion or pleasure.[2] This argument from the organic nature of society is, however, merely intended to create a presumption in favor of a more intimate relation between virtue and happiness than is commonly believed to exist. It shows that the burden of proof lies with him who at any point denies such a relation. A more detailed analysis is needed in order to warrant a positive conclusion.

[1] See C. J. Cornish, *Animals at Work and Play;* Ch. on the "Wild Boy of Pindus."

[2] For examples of what is meant see Symonds, *History of the Renaissance in Italy,* Vol. I, "The Age of the Despots," pp. 42, ff; 53, ff.

### Goodness Involves the Existence of a System of Desires Whose Satisfaction Contributes to Individual Happiness

A great part of our happiness consists in what we may call the satisfaction of our interests. Thus we want to count for something in the world, we want power, knowledge, or whatever it may be. When our desire is attained it does not always afford satisfaction; and sometimes the satisfaction is weak or very short-lived. Nevertheless, it is in the satisfaction of desire that there is found much, probably most of the happiness which we obtain in life. Therefore, the way to enrich life is, speaking generally, to increase the number of our interests in so far as we may reasonably expect to satisfy them. The mother or father that has a child to care for, the boy or man that has a friend into whose life he enters, the employer who is genuinely interested in the welfare of his employees, the business or professional man who is glad to serve his customers, his clients, or his patients as well as himself, the student who has college loyalty, the man or woman of public spirit, each of these is by just so much the richer for this possession. It may cause him effort, the expenditure of time and money, and perhaps anxiety, but everything worth while costs. Nothing for nothing is the fundamental law of life. "He is well paid who is well satisfied," said Portia, after rescuing Bassanio from the clutches of Shylock. The stronger the altruism, the deeper, the more intense, and the more enduring the satisfaction or joy. Thus it comes about that there are men and women who sacrifice their personal interests for the interests of others or for some great cause, who find so much joy in their efforts or their work that they are not conscious of making any sacrifice whatever. As a matter of fact their actual sacrifice may have been very large, but the compensations in the way of joy in good done have been so rich that the losses or privations disappear from their view.

"General Armstrong is assigned at the close of the Civil War to the care of a camp of contrabands at Fortress Monroe. He sees that the Government may go on furnishing the negroes with rations indefinitely, and so raising up a community of paupers. He sees that not help but education in self-help is what they need; not food, but the offer of a choice between work or hunger. He stops the rations and opens a school.

He is execrated by the idlê and the vicious for compelling them to go to work. He is criticized by sentimental philanthropists who think it hard to impose hardship on these idle and incompetent freedmen. He is laughed at as a visionary by hard-headed, practical men who think they know the negro and think they know that nothing can ever be made of the negro. But to the realization of his ideal he gives his life, spending half his time in educating in the principles of industry an outcast race, and the other half in the North educating in the principles of brotherhood a careless Christian constituency. He gives himself unreservedly to this work, and dies before his time, having spent his life too speedily in his devotion to it. And after his death in his diary is found written the sentence, 'I have never known what self-sacrifice means. . .'"

"Dr. Grenfell, a young physician in London, with good prospects opening before him, abandons them and gives his life to the service of a forgotten community of seamen and fishermen and Eskimos on the coast of Labrador. He becomes their servant as doctor, preacher, merchant, magistrate, policeman. Any post which has in it the promise of service he is ready to fill. Exile from home, cold, ice, storm, sleeplessness, poor food at the best, hunger at times, are his life companions. 'Do not pity me,' he says to his American friends. 'I am in a hurry to get back to my Labrador life; I am happiest there.'"[3]

Such men know from experience what Bernard Shaw meant when he wrote:

"This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy."[4]

This broadest form of altruism, this living concern for the welfare of the human race, constitutes a very important factor in many interests which at first sight might appear quite remote from it. Consider, for example, two men who have an equal amount of curiosity about the progress of science and invention. One of them, we will assume, is possessed in addition of the "enthusiasm of humanity"; the other is cold and indifferent to the welfare of his fellow-men. The former sees every new triumph of science, every new miracle of invention, not merely as a subject for curiosity to delight in, but as a factor in the betterment of human life. It therefore possesses for him a double attraction.

[3] Lyman Abbott, in *The Outlook*, Vol. 86, p. 510.
[4] *Man and Superman*, "Epistle Dedicatory," p. XXXI.

Furthermore, whereas the mere unsupported intellectual interest of the selfish man may become dulled with the lapse of time, or through the long-continued repetition of alternations of stimulation and satisfaction, those of the more richly endowed nature are apt to be kept fresh and vigorous by their fusion with that most stable of all interests (where it once exists in any strength whatever), interest in the progress of our race.

There is another aspect of this subject. A man whose life is barren in interests not merely suffers the corresponding loss; there enters the empty house and makes for himself a permanent dwelling place, an unbidden and forbidding guest, one for whom the English language, curiously enough, has no name, but with whom we who speak this language, are as well acquainted as the members of other races. The French call it *ennui*, the Germans *Langeweile* (what could be more expressive?); in English the nearest term we have is *boredom*. An animal is apparently not disturbed by emptiness of mind; in fact, when he finds nothing to do he usually goes promptly to sleep. It is not so with man. Poverty of resource with him may mean positive suffering, a suffering which drives men sometimes into the most desperate or dangerous expedients to rid themselves of its sting. Of course any interests, whatever their nature, provided they be only genuine and strong, will fill the gap. But the man who has altruistic interests is by just so much the richer for his possession; and he has a source of satisfaction which, unlike many others, does not pall with the passing of time; which indeed, if healthy and vigorous at the start, tend to grow stronger and more absorbing with each passing year.

We realize the poverty of the narrower life most vividly when we see a selfish man overtaken by misfortune. He has put all his merchandise into one ship; when that goes down he has nothing left. The unselfish man has many interests. His losses may be great, but they can never take his all. "Calamity falling on a base mind . . . is the one form of sorrow that has no balm in it and that may well make a man say— 'It would have been better for me if I had never been born,'" writes George Eliot in the "Epilogue" to *Romola*. Unselfishness, accordingly, enriches life,

while selfishness tends toward poverty of resource, with its consequent *ennui*.

### Goodness Is an Indispensable Condition of Genuine Friendship

Friendship, in the sense not of mere acquaintanceship, but in the sense of intimacy of personal relationship whether within or outside of the family, is one of the supreme values of life. The craving for the kind of sympathy which can obtain only between friends is probably one of the deepest and the most widespread elements in human nature. There is in every man the longing for companionship which any amount of mere acquaintances can never satisfy. As Aristotle has shown in Books VIII and IX of the *Nichomachean Ethics,* friendship is possible only between good men. A friend is one who is capable of entering into your life and becoming interested in what interests you, almost as you are yourself. This is possible only to the unselfish, for they alone can get outside the boundaries of their own narrow self. From this statement it might seem to follow that only one of the parties need be unselfish. But, as Aristotle further points out, permanent friendship is possible only between the like-minded. Each must be able to trust absolutely the loyalty of the other. Each must find in the other the satisfaction of his fundamental needs of self-revelation. Each must admire the other. While it is true that admiration may be aroused by traits other than moral, yet the deepest and firmest admirations will be called forth only by qualities which have a moral basis. In general it is true that "to have a friend you must be a friend." Thus it comes about that the selfish are doomed to essential isolation and loneliness.

A wealthy manufacturer was once asked by a friend why he never went to New York. His answer was: "I grew up as a boy in the same town with ——— (a well-known magnate of the business world of the generation that has just passed off the stage). He seems to like me, in so far as he is capable of liking anyone, and would be so broken up if I went to New York and stayed at a hotel that I can not bring myself to do it. His

house is a wonderful work of art. He himself is a very exceptional combination of culture, good taste, knowledge, and insight. An evening's talk with him is a rare intellectual treat. But notwithstanding all this, after I have been in that house forty-eight hours I feel I must make my escape at whatever cost. For I know its owner would not hesitate to cut my throat if he thought he could make a dollar by the operation. And the consciousness of this fact, as it grows upon me, ends by becoming unbearable." A man like ——— is thus condemned to pass through life without an intimate friend because his selfishness repels men capable of genuine friendship. It is the consciousness of this fact that constitutes the tragedy of that black picture of the life of the successful political criminal, the Fifth Act of *Macbeth*.

### The Good Man Lives in a Better World Than the Bad Man

The good man lives in a better world than the bad man, for another reason than that just presented. He not merely attracts, or tends to attract, the good as friends, he also awakens that which is best in the ordinary men and women about him. "Nobleness enkindles nobleness." There are potentialities for both good and evil locked up in the character of most persons, and whether the better or the worse ones shall come to the surface on a given occasion depends to a considerable extent upon how one is being treated by his fellow-men. We tend to respond to good with good, and to evil with evil. There are at least three reasons for this fact. One is the principle of imitation; another is that of retaliation, including under this term the return of good for good, as well as evil for evil; the third is the fact that we tend to live up to the expectations of those whom we respect or admire. There are unquestionably exceptions to this rule. We are not entitled to assert the existence of anything more than tendencies in this part of the field, but they are tendencies with a wide range of application.

### Good Men Are Apt to Have Children Who Are Like Themselves

In several studies of criminal families, the most famous of which, by R. L. Dugdale, was made upon several generations of

the "Jukes" family, living in central New York, it has been shown that the descendants of criminals are themselves, for the most part, either criminals or paupers. Thus in one branch of the "Jukes" family (the worst) over half of the male adults were criminals. The reasons are two. That character, good or bad, is subject to the law of heredity, just as is intelligence, is beyond question. Its influences are likely to be confirmed and strengthened by the kind of training the child receives. In the bad family it is always bad; in the mediocre either mediocre, or positively bad; in the good family usually good. There is no important act in human life in which reason ordinarily plays so insignificant a rôle as in the choice of husband or wife. "All the customers I have ever seen," says Nietzsche, "are very cautious in the selection of wares, except those who are choosing a companion for life. This they take out of a grab-bag." However, in so far as reason ever does enter, the good are likely to marry the good, because of congeniality with respect to interests and identity of outlook upon life. Where this happens the chances that the children will be above the average in character are greatly increased. Upon the character of our children depends much of the happiness of our lives. In a selfish, ill-tempered family, there is constant quarreling. Each is suspicious of all the others, convinced that they are always trying to get out of some disagreeable duty and load it on his shoulders, depriving or trying to deprive him of his share of the good things which should be common possessions, not appreciating the sacrifices he makes, not considerate of his special tastes or susceptibilities, *etc., etc.* In a family, on the other hand, whose members are capable of thinking of something besides self, you will ordinarily find peace and glad coöperation. In the former, chronic ill temper and the feeling that one is being constantly "worked" produce, in the end, hate; in the other, mutual regard, unselfish devotion, charity in judgment, consideration, produce love. When old age comes the parents are commonly absolutely dependent upon their children, usually for support, almost always for a home, and in any event, largely for companionship. Upon the character of this home, or if they still maintain a home of their own, this companionship, depends a great part of their happiness. Pride

in the attainments and joy in the welfare of their children is, from the beginning, a leading element in the happiness of the parent. The goodness of the parent thus tends to be repeated in and rewarded by goodness in the children.

### Goodness Means Growing Into the Likeness of the Good Man

"The greatest penalty of wrong doing," writes Plato, "is to grow into the likeness of the bad man." Similarly, we may say the greatest reward of right doing is to grow into the likeness of the good man. For "life is a struggle to think well of ourselves." The man of character possesses strength, the strength which we admire in an explorer like Peary or Scott. The highest forms of strength, however, show themselves not in sport, such as making a dash for the Pole, but in service. It is the life of a Lincoln, a Booker Washington, a Jane Addams, that arouses not only admiration, but enthusiasm. Feelings of this nature are awakened not merely by the great, or those who have attracted public attention. Each of us knows men and women of obscure lives whose courage or fortitude, strong sense of justice, unselfishness, patience, and cheerfulness, exhibited within the narrow limits of an apparently commonplace existence, entitle them to rank with the world's recognized heroes. No one can admire characters such as these without wishing that he too might be able to act in like manner, and that he too might be like them. The knowledge that one has failed at this point, that one deserves the contempt which is heaped upon the mean and the base, this is the penalty of wrong doing which Plato describes as the greatest. The belief that one is making progress in the attainment of the good character, even though the goal may still be far distant, this is, in so far forth, a source of satisfaction.

### The Disadvantages of Possessing the Altruistic Spirit

But while all this is true, we can not maintain that a man is invariably and necessarily the happier for his unselfishness of spirit or for his devotion to perfection of character. We begin with an examination of the former. There are two fundamental conditions of happiness, the possession of interests and the pos-

session of the means of satisfying these interests. Where circumtances exclude the latter, the individual doubtless gains in happiness, or at least he saves unhappiness, by being without the former. "In this world," writes a student in an examination paper, "the stronger a man's love for right doing the more depressed he will be." This is an aspect of the case which can not be evaded or denied; although we must remember, as was pointed out above, that a mind empty of interests is *not* empty, but is filled with *ennui*. However, as it is better not to have children than to see them fail absolutely, or suffer hopelessly and endlessly in other ways, so it is doubtless better not to have interests than to have them continually wounded, especially if the future offers no grounds for hope of better things. Nor does the unselfish man gain the rewards of friendship when, through the dearth of congenial subjects in the community from which his most intimate associates must be drawn, or through any other combination of circumstances, the material out of which friendship is made is not supplied to him. Taking all the facts into consideration, we see that while the case for altruism is very much stronger than the average man supposes, any such thing as complete, universal, and necessary harmony between the spirit of self-sacrifice and personal happiness can not be asserted.

Some, indeed, would go much farther and claim that an unselfish man can not be anything but profoundly unhappy in a world so full of failure, suffering, and moral evil. Let him be as successful as you please in helping others; let his pupils through his instruction grow into intellectual giants and the standard bearers of a new moral dispensation, his patients always recover, his employees always prosper, the city for which he works improve every day in appearance, in commercial prosperity, in educational facilities, in good government, and whatever else you will. He knows perfectly well that elsewhere millions are writhing in the fiery grasp of disease or going down to a premature grave, millions are fighting desperately to keep the wolf from the door, many of whom know not where they shall find tomorrow's bread, millions are living in cities where they and their children are the helpless victims of bad sanitation, crowded tenements, wretchedly conducted schools, inefficient and

dishonest government. And these things he is absolutely powerless to help. How, in such a world, it is asked, can the man possessed of an altruistic spirit be happy?

The answer is that some can and some can not, according to their endowment with respect to that which we, in our ignorance, call "temperament." Among those who can live happily under such conditions, however, are precisely some of the most unselfish and ardent servants of humanity, men like General Armstrong, men and women like the teachers whom this great man gathered about him in Hampden Institute after the Civil War.[5] As we saw in Chapter VI, Nature has mercifully made most of us so that we are untouched by deprivation and suffering which we can not in any way help, provided they are not thrust under our eyes, and provided the victims are not those we love. And this is largely true, as we there insisted, of those who rejoice to help where they can help, as well as of those who care only for self. Altruism and sympathy must not be confused. Sympathy is the mirroring in the imagination of the conscious state of others, with their sufferings, their sorrows, and their joys. Altruism is the desire to serve and to avoid injuring. The good man may have a large or small endowment of the first, just as it may happen; it is the second that counts in the world of conduct. Thus the best of men may rejoice in the good which they see growing under their hands, without being crushed by the evil that lies outside the boundaries set to their vision and their power of action. If to anyone this seems a dark saying, it is only because he is insisting upon making the old, old mistake, that of judging others by himself. "The unfinished," wrote the Genevan philosopher Amiel, in his *Journal intime*, "is nothing." That is to say, "I will be satisfied with nothing short of perfection." This is a hard world for a man of that type. But I have noticed that its representatives are not usually those most active in making this hard world better. So that they themselves often are, with all their fine sensibilities, chief among the "unfinished."

[5] See the testimony of Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery*, p. 56.

### The Disadvantages of Possessing the Desire for Excellence of Character

It is essentially in this same way that I should deal with the contention often urged that devotion to an ideal of perfection of personal character can never be anything else than a source of unhappiness. An impressive statement of this contention is made by Carl Hilty in the following words:

"Happiness does not consist in the sense of virtue alone. This idol of the incorruptible Robespierre will not serve us. For virtue in its completeness dwells in no human heart. One must have but a meager conception of virtue, or else a very limited intellectual capacity, who finds himself always self-contented. . . . The maxim says that a good conscience makes a soft pillow, and he who has this unfailing sense of duty done no doubt has happiness; but I have not, as yet, fallen in with such a man. My impression is that there is not one of us who has ever, even for a single day, done his whole duty. Beyond this, I need not go. If one of my readers says to me: 'I am the man who has thus done his duty,'—well, he may be quite right, but I do not care for that man's nearer acquaintance. The further a man advances in the doing of his duty, so much the more his conscience and perception grow refined. The circle of his duties widens continually before him, so that he understands the Apostle Paul, when, with perfect sincerity, and without false humility, he speaks of himself as the 'chief of sinners.'" [6]

To this argument I should reply that it certainly involves no arrogance, no insensibility to the interval that separates you from the goal of perfection to recognize that in such and such a particular crisis you have played the man, that you now have a better control over your temper than you had a year ago, that you know you would not think of permitting yourself today actions which you performed without compunction in the not distant past. The gulf between attainment and ideal always remains enormous. This fact must have been impressed upon us by our discussion of the obligation to positive morality, if it was never appreciated before. But the readiness to look forward with ardor and hope to the adventure of tomorrow, to drive from the mind past defeats, and to take courage from past successes—well, there is such an attitude as a fact, and I can not see how it can be commanded out of existence. Whether it shall be the successes or failures that determine primarily one's gen-

[6] *Happiness*, p. 106.

eral attitude towards life is largely a matter of temperament. And it can never be affirmed—on any other than an ascetic theory of life—that it is wrong to drive from our minds the thought of evil done, of opportunities for good let slip, unless in so doing we render ourselves less sensitive to our ideal when we come to action. As to that—experience seems to show that it is precisely the most hopeful, the most cheerful, the most joyous that, on the average, have the most moral strength.

### The External Penalties of Goodness

What I have been trying to show is that while the rewards of virtue are, in any individual case, probable, they are not inevitable or absolutely necessary. Some good men are the victims of an unfavorable environment. Others are so unfortunately constituted that they can not forget the great circle of suffering and moral evil which lies beyond the boundaries of their power to ameliorate. Some again, in their attitude towards their own character, have an eye solely for their own failures and inadequacies; although others, forgetting the things which are behind, can run with hope and zest the race appointed for today.

It remains to add a few words about the penalties of devotion to duty. These, we must freely recognize, are sometimes terrible. The recent war furnishes all the evidence for this statement that is needed. Everywhere in the British Empire the armies were filled in large part by volunteers. It was precisely the best, then, who elected freely to expose themselves not merely to death, but to possibilities in comparison with which death were a positive blessing. I do not believe that anyone who leads a completely self-centered life can ever be thoroughly happy. But I am not prepared to maintain that they are less unhappy than some of those whose bodies were most crushed and mangled, and who were left helpless and adrift with no human being who really cared for them to halve their sufferings and privations by their sympathy and affection.

### Why Goodness and Individual Happiness Do Not Necessarily Go Together

The reason why character may turn out to be a source of unhappiness rather than happiness lies in the fact that man is a

member of an organism, and as such his fate can not be independent of the nature of the family, the local community, and indeed of the race of which he is a member. As its excellence increases, the chances of happiness for the good man improve in a rapidly accelerating ratio. Virtue does not invariably bring happiness. But one of the great tasks of humanity is so to mold the structure of social existence that the coincidence of these two elements of life may become more and more complete and enduring.

### Conclusion as to the Relation of Goodness and Individual Happiness

My conclusion is that the possession of strong, deeply rooted interests in our fellows tends to enrich our own life and in so doing enhances greatly its joys and mitigates its inevitable sorrows. It is not true ordinarily that a man would be better off, as far as his own happiness is concerned, if he had no moral nature. If so, possession of the altruistic spirit is usually a blessing to its possessor as well as to the world. But although this connection between virtue and personal happiness rests upon the very foundations of human life, we are not justified in asserting that it is universal or absolutely necessary. There have been men who if they could have seen the outcome in terms of personal happiness, no matter how keen their scrutiny and how profound their insight, would have found that the balance, as far as they themselves were concerned, was on the wrong side of the ledger; and this will remain the case for as long a time as any living person can look forward to. And yet many of these men, even if they had been provided with the foreknowledge, would have made the sacrifice none the less. There is such a thing as the self-sacrificing spirit, the spirit that never thinks of asking "Shall I make more out of this enterprise than I lose?" and that would not falter or fail in the face of any answer, however adverse. This spirit is present, I suppose, in greater or less degree, in practically every mother. It will exhibit itself in almost every human being when the scales drop from his eyes and he realizes the issues at stake, especially if the issues are great issues. Let us then ask another question about such a man—not

a question which *he* will ask, but one which the on-looking moralist can not help raising and for which he, as an observer of human life, must find an answer: "Is the man who sacrifices self for others a fool for his pains?" This is the problem which when put into parliamentary language reads: "Is self-sacrifice reasonable?"

## Chapter XXIII

# IS SELF-SACRIFICE REASONABLE?

In order to determine whether a given form of conduct is reasonable it is necessary to understand precisely what is meant by the term. I shall try to elucidate its meaning by presenting certain examples of what would commonly be regarded as reasonable—or rather, unreasonable action, and then undertake to determine by analysis what is their common character. This procedure should supply us with a criterion for distinguishing between reasonable and unreasonable conduct, and thus afford an answer to the question, "Is self-sacrifice reasonable?"

The adjectives *reasonable* and *unreasonable* are frequently applied to actions in so far as they affect our personal welfare alone. The incidents which follow are instances of the unreasonable in this sense.

### Types of Unreasonable Conduct

Our first exhibit will be a young woman whose father and grandfather had died of tuberculosis and who at the time of the following incident was sick with a severe cold. Despite the entreaties of her mother she got up from her bed in order to participate in a picnic which was to involve a two hours' ride in an uncovered launch, with the temperature low and rain threatening every minute. "I know it is foolish to go, but I am going just the same," was her reply to her mother's remonstrances.

Three middle-aged spinsters living in dire poverty were once sent fifty dollars by a distant relative. They promptly put fifteen dollars of this amount into photographs. "We had been wanting to have our pictures taken for such a long time," they explained. They sent the donor one of each of the photographs. Whatever my readers may think of this expenditure, he regarded it as unreasonable in the extreme.

In Thackeray's *Henry Esmond* the hero recognizes his own folly in wishing to win Beatrix, knowing perfectly well the incompatibility of tastes and interests existing between them, and thus their unfitness for a common life. Nevertheless the strength of his infatuation is such that he can not desist from making every attempt to gain her affection and her consent to marriage.[1] This incident is in many respects parallel with that told by Beneke concerning a victim of the gambling mania.

"Thiebault in his *Memoirs of Frederick the Great* tells of a certain Chamberlain von Mueller, attached to the court of Frederick William I. In consequence of his passion for gambling he had lost his entire fortune, and at the same time, through the accompanying emotional excitement, had undermined his health. . . One of his acquaintances once said to him: 'Tell me frankly, if an angel should come down from Heaven and say to you, If you will play no more I will restore to you your property, and the lost strength and beauty of your youth, what would you do?' After a moment's reflection the unfortunate man replied: 'I should play.'"[2]

One of the most deadly enemies of rational living is anger. In *Pembroke,* Mary E. Wilkins tells of a man who got into a quarrel over politics with his prospective father-in-law, and left the house with the words: "I will never set foot in this house again." He never saw his sweetheart after that moment.

The hero of George Gissing's interesting story, "The Capitalist," went one Saturday afternoon to a free exhibition of paintings. On asking the price of a picture which particularly attracted him he was insulted by the proprietor of the establishment, who presumably recognized by his dress and manner his status as a clerk on a pound a week. He thereupon bought the picture on the spot, although to do so meant saddling himself with a debt to a pawnbroker which would involve semi-starvation and the deprivation of all the pleasures and most of the comforts of life for two or three years to come. And he did not even get, or for a single moment expect to get the picture, which went

[1] Book III, Ch. II (towards the end). Note Thackeray's own remarks on this subject in the same chapter.

[2] *Praktische Philosophie,* Vol. I, p. 163, note.

directly to the pawnbroker. In other words, he sold himself into slavery to gratify a momentary spasm of wounded vanity.[3]

Pride, which in its place is one of the best traits of human nature, may become, when released from proper restraint, an all-devouring flame. John Hay tells of a married couple who, as the result of a petty quarrel for which neither would acknowledge himself in the wrong, lived for years in their great palace in Madrid without once speaking to each other. "And yet a single expression of regret from either would have brought a reconciliation." [4] A further stage on this same mad road is represented by a party of mountain climbers in the high Alps, the members of which exposed themselves to imminent risk of death because no one of them would admit himself in the wrong.[5]

### The Nature of Reasonable Action

These incidents will serve to suggest to us the variety and extent of the unreasonable as a factor in everyday life. At the same time they indicate unmistakably its essential feature. In each the person concerned acts in defiance of the demands of an objective valuation of his own interests (Chapter VIII, page 115). Still confining ourselves to the point of view of egoism, all other forms of unreasonable action can be shown to be, in the last resort, instances of the same thing. For example, it is regarded as unreasonable to adopt an end and not accept the means necessary to its attainment. But why does a man ever do this? A possible explanation is the discovery, through experience, that the cost is greater than he had supposed. He decided, for example, to attend college even though he had to provide every cent of his own support. Then he finds that he is breaking down in health under the strain. Under such circumstances no one would call it unreasonable to abandon the attempt. But if he spends money necessary for his support upon amusements and luxuries, the only result of which can be his leaving college before the completion of his course, then his conduct is

[3] From *The House of Cobwebs. Cf.* Maria's marriage in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park.*

[4] *Castilian Days,* chapter on "Spanish Living and Dying."

[5] John Tyndall, *Hours of Exercise in the Alps.*

unreasonable. This is clearly a case of choosing the lesser, but nearer good, in place of that which is greater, but more remote. Again, as I have tried to show in Chapter XIX, page 396, we sometimes consciously do that which we know will secure us no good whatever. A man for example, may deprive himself of the necessities of life in order that he may sleep his last sleep in a grave of his own. Such acts are also called irrational, on the ground, obviously, that when the desire reaches its goal the good obtained in return for all these deprivations will equal zero.

This analysis of the unreasonable reveals the nature of the reasonable. A reasonable action is one in which all the values involved are seen steadily and completely, and attract the will in precise proportion to their relative importance. In other words, those actions are reasonable which would flow from a complete knowledge and perfect realization of the sum total of their consequences.

Knowledge and realization, as here used, may appear to be entirely different things. As a matter of fact the second is a higher (because more complete) form of the first. I know in the most literal meaning of the term the sensations red and blue, either because I am experiencing them now, or can call them up in their fullness in imagination. But a man born blind, while he may know a lot of things about them, for example, that they are the product of ether waves striking the normal retina, does not know them in the strict sense of the term. To use a distinction suggested by James, he has knowledge about, but not acquaintance with. Similarly I have acquaintance with the number six. Possibly a thousand miles may be said to have some meaning for me if I have frequently traveled that distance on a railroad. But twenty-five trillions (the number of miles between the earth and the nearest star) are beyond the power of my mind to grasp. The astronomers exhaust their ingenuity in trying to interpret such figures, but with only indifferent success; and in a sense they must remain forever unknown unless the mind is to expand beyond anything conceivable today. We read about the ancient Greeks for years, and then some unusually concrete narrative, or perhaps some trivial anecdote, or some inscription on a tomb, brings home to us the fact that they were not stone

or plaster statues but living, palpitating beings like ourselves. This is a revelation which literally transfigures ancient history. We now know these people in a sense in which we never knew them before. If *rational* means that kind of knowledge which most completely fulfils its function of representing reality, then realized knowledge is the most perfect product of reason.[6]

Such knowledge and such realization, applied not merely to a few of our actions here and there, but consistently throughout, would result in the willing subordination of self to the claims of that majestic whole of which we each form a part. Just as it would lead us to love our more remote future as we do that immediate future which we commonly call "the present," so would it lead us in like manner to love our neighbor as ourselves. Our attitude in the latter instance would be as genuinely reasonable as in the former, because due to the application of precisely the same principle.[7] For if knowledge and imagination render conduct reasonable in the one case they do so in the other also.

## The Meaning of the Assertion that the Right Is the Reasonable

It appears, then, that reasonable conduct consists in the choice (where some choice is inevitable) of the greater good in preference to the less, whoever may thereby be benefited and whoever may be required to make the necessary sacrifice. As we learned in Chapter VIII this is the essence of right. Right conduct and reasonable conduct are thus the same thing. Why, then, does ordinary linguistic usage recognize a certain difference between the two terms? Because *reasonable* contains an element which is at all events not explicit in *right*. This additional feature dis-

[6] This statement does not contradict anything said in Chapter XX, page 437. The imagination, like everything else in the world, has its own limitations, and one function to which it is wholly unequal is the representation of the passage of any considerable amount of time. For a very interesting instance of a mind's awakening to the reality of the dead past, see the article by E. H. Wilkins entitled "Past and Present" in the *International Journal of Ethics*, Vol. 36, p. 240. It will be obvious that "reason" as used in this Chapter does not mean, as in Chapter XVI, an alleged faculty of intuition, but is rather the name for our intellectual processes of whatever kind.

[7] See above, Chapter V, pages 84 ff; Chapter VIII, pages 139 ff.

closes itself when we ask why we care whether our conduct is reasonable or not. The answer is that when we are sacrificing our interests for the benefit of some other person or group of persons we may want to know whether God, or some devil, or angel, or human genius, or anyone with more knowledge or penetration than we, would be justified, on the basis of his superior insight, in calling us a fool for our pains. In other words, we want to know whether, if we saw into the whole situation more deeply, or saw around it more completely, we should cease to recognize the claims of another's good upon us. We want to assure ourselves that our conviction that we ought to serve others as well as self is not the consequence of some blindness, or narrowness, or obliquity of vision on our part, some incapacity to see things as they are.

To assert that the right is reasonable is thus to assert that the moral ideal can maintain its claims upon our allegiance against any and every opposing consideration that can be urged from whatever source; that the course of action which it demands is one that would still appeal to us after every fact in the universe had been passed in review. A reasonable principle of action is therefore ultimate in the sense that it is beyond criticism. And it is beyond criticism because there is nothing left which is capable of offering effective criticism.

### The Authority of the Moral Ideal

In this reasonableness of the moral ideal consists what the moralists call its "authority." This term means that we believe, however vaguely we may conceive the matter, that our ideal of conduct is one whose power to call forth our devotion can not be undermined by any new fact that will ever be discovered; that the more completely we understand life and the closer we get to its realities the more earnest and uncompromising will be our desire to conform to its dictates. Authority means finality —the last word on the subject. The authority of the moral ideal, then, means that it can justify its claims in the face of any opponent that may question them. The authority of the moral ideal is thus but another name for its reasonableness.

### Ethical Nihilism

That the right is reasonable in this sense has been denied in one way or another for generations. One line of attack starts from the Egoistic Utilitarian definition of *right* (Chapter XVII, p. 332) as that which is commanded under penalty, and represents the moral ideal as a command whose varied sanctions, like the images of a hundred different but related objects thrown upon the photographer's plate, form a kind of amorphous blur, or perhaps a halo about the idea of the action. In the same way a confused cloud of happy images of past events may arise in a man's mind as he catches his first glimpse of the home of his childhood after many years of absence. In the days when it was believed that associations formed in the minds of the parents could be inherited by their children the process of building up these composite photographs was supposed to have begun among our savage ancestors in the fear of the power of the chief or the tribal gods and to have been continued by inheritance from generation to generation till it attained its present proportions in ourselves. In this way, it was supposed, a purely egoistic race could pass from the knowledge: I must not do this if I do not wish to bring upon myself such and such a punishment, to the feeling: This ought not to be done. That there is no bridge from "I will be made to suffer if I do this," to "I ought not to do this" was not perceived by these abstract thinkers.

A still more ancient form of ethical nihilism (it is found in embryo in Herodotus) regards man's moral nature as a kind of putty, or, if you prefer, freshly made cement, which society can mould into any form it pleases—quite apart from threats of punishment. Add to this the second assumption that the content of morality has been determined for us, in some way or other, by selfish autocrats, crafty priests, or at best by the pressure of external circumstances and modes of life which have long ceased to exist, and you have the maxim, "Custom is lord of all,"—and an arbitrary and tyrannical one at that. From this proposition (it is supposed) the really clever will know enough

to draw the conclusion that morality is nothing more than a blind urge from which reflection will save the emancipated mind.

For the past sixty years we have had with us another dogma, propped up by the theory of natural selection, which still makes its voice heard where men meet to talk about serious things. To be sure the majority of biologists seem to have abandoned their faith in the theory of natural selection as an explanation of the *origin* of any element whatever of mind or body. But the popularizers in sociology and ethics who have the ear of the public have not yet discovered this fact. There is on this view no real difference between the moral emotions and the most commonplace or even disgusting instincts or other contrivances introduced by nature in order to maintain human life on this planet. The moral sentiments, in other words, are nothing better than a device of nature to trick us into the performance of the altruistic acts needed for the preservation of the race. "Kant, as we all know, compared the Moral Law to the starry heavens and found them both sublime. It would, on the naturalistic hypothesis, be more to the purpose to compare it to the protective blotches on a beetle's back, and to find them both ingenious." [8] But if this is the most that can be said for the root whence spring our moral ideals they can have no dignity or claim to consideration not shared by the meanest organ of the body.

The corollary which it is intended we should draw from any of these views is that "conscience remains with us, like the hero in the story [of Lohengrin] only so long as we do not ask where it comes from." [9] According to the view for which I have attempted to present the evidence, on the other hand, genuine morality does not consist in being pushed or pulled about by some mysterious impulse of which no account can be given, such as the antipathy some people feel for eating rabbits, and all of us feel for eating rats. Neither does it consist in blind obedience to senseless customs, to meaningless taboos, nor to the ghosts of dead ancestors. It is that which we will always choose to do

[8] Arthur Balfour, *International Journal of Ethics*, Vol. 4, p. 420. The same in, *Foundations of Belief*, Ch. I, Mr. Balfour is formulating the views of others, not his own.

[9] Rée, *Die Entstehung des Gewissens*, p. 230.

when knowledge reaches its culmination in the act of complete realization, and which will be approved by the most comprehensive reflection of a mind capable of this higher form of insight.

The feature common to most of these nihilistic theories is the supposition that morality is an affair of commands and prohibitions, or some form of pressure exercised upon us by a foreign will, or an alien force of one kind or another. As a matter of fact morality does not, in essence, consist in obedience to any power outside of our own will, not even to God Himself. We may, indeed, conceive of morality as representing also the will of God, just as a child in a family may recognize that kind treatment of his little brothers will please his absent mother. In the case of the believer and the child this consideration may exercise a very powerful influence upon the will. But obedience to God, like obedience to the mother, must derive its motive force either from fear or some equally unworthy spring of action, or from some such morally neutral desire as approbativeness, or from a real desire to serve God or the mother, or else those who are the object of God's or the mother's solicitude. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" This question means that what distinguishes a God from a devil is not power but righteousness; that is to say, a spirit which will demand from His subjects only such actions as would be binding upon their conscience in the absence of command.

In sum, morality consists in the pursuit and conservation of values, and precisely of those values which appeal to us most powerfully when our minds succeed most completely in apprehending things as they really are.

## Is Self-sacrifice Reasonable?

Is self-sacrifice reasonable? Not all, by any means. Sacrifice of the interests of the self of this afternoon for those of the self of next week or next year is not in itself reasonable, but is only such when the two are incompatible and when the second set of interests is actually more valuable; that is to say, represents a greater good, than the first. Similarly not all sacrifice of self to others is reasonable, but only that which takes place when choice between the two goods is unavoidable and that which

is given to or left for the other person is more valuable, objectively viewed, than that which is surrendered by the self.

### Has the Preceding Analysis Any Value for Practice?

During the course of this analysis the reader has perhaps been asking himself whether the recognition that self-sacrifice is reasonable is likely to have any particular effect upon practice. I reply in the first place that the primary function of ethics, like astronomy, is to discover and to present to such persons as may be interested the facts about the field with which it concerns itself. In the second place, I believe that the recognition of morality as reasonable is likely to be valuable to some members of a certain class of persons. The thoroughly selfish are not likely to be affected by it in any appreciable degree. For morality is primarily a matter of will; and where motive power is lacking, insight can accomplish nothing. The thoroughly unselfish will be as little affected. They never think, under ordinary circumstances, of raising the question whether the altruistic man may not, after all, be a fool. When it is raised they are apt to see by an act of direct insight that which we have here sought to demonstrate by a laborious process of argument. Should they not discover it or should they be led to believe the contrary, they would not feel particularly disturbed. For, let morality be demonstrated to be as unreasonable or absurd as anyone ever claimed it to be, they would still insist upon keeping their own hands clean, and upon seeking to alleviate and refusing to increase for their own profit the sufferings of the world.

From these facts it would seem to follow that while our study of this problem may (or may not) be interesting, it at any rate has no "practical" value. The conclusion, however, does not hold, because there are other classes besides the utterly heartless and the utterly unselfish. In particular there is a large one whose members are neither absolutely selfish nor very widely or very profoundly unselfish. Let a person of this kind be brought, through whatever means, face to face with the question whether the good man is not the dupe of some blind, unintelligent impulse. His answer to this question might make a good deal of difference in his conduct. When Paul du Chaillu was exploring in West

Africa his party ran out of provisions and were practically without food for several days. Just as they were being reduced to extremities his native followers killed a huge snake and devoured it with great relish. Du Chaillu was unable to bring himself to taste it, but during the entire progress of the feast he kept cursing himself roundly for his squeamishness.[10] If he had been placed in a similar position a number of times he might have refrained twice or thrice, but after that, especially if he had white companions with stronger stomachs who were able to assure him from their own experience that it was only the first bite that cost, he probably would have forced himself to overcome his antipathy, and would presently have been wondering why he had ever made any fuss about the matter. So it may be in the infinitely more significant situations of the moral life. If a man with a mediocre equipment of altruism comes, in whatever way, to believe that he is a fool for whatever interest he has in others, he will feel tempted deliberately to try to choke the growth of such generous impulses as he possesses. He will, to be sure, never wholly succeed; but he may succeed partially. On the other hand, if he comes to see that it is precisely unselfishness that means clarity and breadth of vision, sensitiveness to reality in all its phases, and unity or harmony of character; in other words, if he discovers that it is the man whose eyes are *not* blinded to whom the demands of the moral ideal most effectively appeal, he will tend to feel desirous of cultivating rather than discouraging the growth of his best impulses. In this way the discussion of the question whether the service of our fellows is our reasonable service may prove to be a not unimportant factor in the moral salvation of some who hesitate and grope their way in this night journey of ours where the path of him who is not to be lost must be illumined either by generous feeling or by intelligence.

[10] *Harper's Magazine*, Vol. 23, p. 21.

# NOTES

# NOTES

## I

### The Unity of the Right and the Good

The unity of these two terms, *the right* and *the good,* is found in the fact that each adjective is applied to its object as the result of a judgment of approbation or disapprobation. Moral approbation, which gives rise to "right" and "wrong," is, as will appear, a special form of approbation in the broader sense, and this broader approbation is the source of the adjective *good.*

### Ethics as a Study of Conduct

Some readers will doubtless be surprised to see the subject matter of ethics described as judgments upon conduct rather than conduct itself. But the difference between the two points of view is not so great as may appear at first sight. The source of all judgments upon conduct, both judgments of right and judgments of good, is certain ideals. If an act, whether mine or another's, conforms to these ideals, I approve. But if the object of approbation is a proposed action of self, the matter does not end there. An ideal is a force; it tends to produce action in conformity with itself. These ideals are thus not merely the source of our judgments, but also the foundation of the moral life. But ethics, at least as I conceive it, is concerned primarily with the nature, source and validity of the ideals. It does not ask how far and under what circumstances, when they come into conflict with opposing forces, they succeed in actually determining conduct. It asks, for example, what are man's judgments concerning theft and what is the validity of such judgments. But it does not ask how many men under the pressure of the desire for money will succeed in maintaining their honesty.

## V

### Sympathy and Altruism

The power to realize, to put ourselves in another's place, so that we in some manner feel what he feels, is what is commonly

called sympathy. Obviously it is not identical with altruism, for altruism is a desire. Sympathy is merely one of its stimulants. Since altruism can be aroused by other agencies and, indeed, in generous natures, needs no special stimulant whatever, the following statement of Boswell represents a psychological possibility, and may well give us a true picture of the character of that excellent gentleman. " 'I own, Sir, I have not so much feeling for the distress of others as some people have or pretend to have; but I know this that I would do all in my power to relieve them.' " (Boswell, *Life of Samuel Johnson,* Hill Edition, Vol. II, p. 537. *Cf.* in the same Vol., p. 106). The failure to recognize this distinction is the fundamental flaw in Adam Smith's argument quoted in the text, Chapter VI, page 101.

In persons without altruism, sympathy—like love—will not produce acts of genuine altruism but, where sympathy is painful, only an attempt to get rid of the reflected suffering by the shortest way practicable. The man referred to in the text who rode in the street cars with his eyes closed will serve as an example.

### The Existence of Malevolence

It is claimed by some writers that there is no such thing as the desire of harm for harm's sake; that the actions attributed to it are explainable as due to the love of power and the love of nervous excitement. Such is the position taken by Mr. Stephen in the *Science of Ethics,* Ch. VI, secs. 14-19, and by Mr. Bradley in *Mind,* Vol. 8, p. 415. This position is ably criticized by Professor Bain in *Mind,* Vol. 8, pp. 60, 563.[1] Professor Bain unquestionably exaggerates greatly the amount of malevolence in ordinary human nature. For example, if his account were correct we could never trust the statements of impartial witnesses as we constantly do. They would invariably lie when they could thereby get anyone into trouble; whereas we know even the most egoistic will seldom do this unless they are angered or unless they hope to gain some ulterior advantage. But the existence of malevolence seems beyond question. The best single piece of evidence for this assertion is certain phenomena just

[1] It should be noted that Mr. Bradley later changed his views on this subject; see *Mind,* new series, Vol. 13, p. 160.

described in the text. The love of power and the love of nervous excitement are for the most part unselective. Each is ready to exploit any victim that comes its way, in the main without discrimination. On the other hand, the most important and widespread manifestations of malevolence, namely those motivated by anger, are with very few exceptions selective; they aim at the suffering of some particular individual or class of individuals. Thus it is the king and not just anybody that Hamlet, his father, and the audience want to see killed; although they could get fully as much nervous excitement out of the death of Horatio or Ophelia providing it was sufficiently bloody. And Hamlet could gain the same sense of power from murdering anyone else of equal standing,—say the King of England to whose court he was shipped. It is true that a man can wrong me only in so far as I am in some sense at the time in his power; and I can perhaps most effectively rid myself of the sense of impotence by injuring him rather than anyone else. But malevolence, as we have seen, is often aroused by unintended injuries, including those of which the agent may be entirely unconscious, as where he is the bearer of dispatches containing bad news; and it may be directed towards animals, or even things. But in all such instances the issue of comparative power is never raised. In so far, then, as malevolence is born of anger its victims tend to be restricted to those who have caused pain, although it may extend to all members of their class. The love of power and, to a less extent, the love of nervous excitement may travel the same road for a distance, but eventually their ways part.

## VI

### A List of Objections to the Thesis of Chapter VI

The theory that benevolence and malevolence are the sources of our moral judgments must face a formidable series of objections. I shall formulate them in terms of the relation of benevolence to the eudemonic judgment, for what applies to it holds for malevolence and the dysdemonic judgment also.

1. This view can explain at most why we are interested in

*results*, but not why we are concerned for the nature of the *volition*. This objection is considered in Chapter VI, page 99.

2. Benevolence is an extremely capricious force, and its intensity and often its very existence depend upon a great variety of more or less accidental personal relationships. But right and wrong are essentially independent of personal relationships. If A's treatment of B is wrong, it is wrong regardless of how much I, the judge, happen to be interested in either A or B. For an examination of this objection see Chapter VII, page 109.

3. A third objection may be formulated in the words of Adam Smith, as found in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Bohn Edition, Part IV, Ch. II, p. 271, as follows: "It seems impossible that the approbation of virtue should be a sentiment of the same kind with that by which we approve of a convenient and well-contrived building; or that we should have no other reason for praising a man than that for which we commend a chest of drawers." The significance of this objection for us is that, as far as anything which has yet been said is concerned, the sole ground for approving right conduct is our desire for the welfare of those who will be affected by it. We desire such conduct, not for its own sake, but as a means to an end. If theft and lying would serve human interests better than honesty and veracity, theft and lying would be what we should demand. Our satisfaction, therefore, in the prospect of a large crop of honesty has exactly the same source as our satisfaction at the prospect of a large crop of wheat. But such a conclusion is patently inadequate and therefore discredits the premises from which it was derived. The issue thus raised supplies the subject matter of Chapter X, and is taken up again in our study of Aristotle's ethics in Chapter XVI.

4. It involves a conception of the motives for moral action flagrantly at odds with facts. The point of this assertion will appear from the following considerations. A man may conform to the demands of the moral ideal for any number of reasons which have no real moral value, such as the desire to keep out of the penitentiary. Such actions are due to something lying outside of morality, a mere accident as far as it is concerned. There must be some motive, however, which entitles an act to be called

right, and this must be one which leads to right conduct not accidentally but necessarily. Such a motive must be identical with the standard by which it is denominated right, for only in that case is it certain that both are moving in the same direction. The standard or ideal, in other words, being a desire, is a motive or spring of action just as much as it is a standard of approbation or disapprobation. Accordingly, if the eudemonic judgment has its source in benevolence, altruism must be the motive for all conduct affecting primarily the interests of others which can properly be called right. But, it has been urged (by Adam Smith among others), altruism is too weak a force in man to account for the actual amount of morality which we find in the world about us. This difficulty is examined in Chapter VI, page 101 and following.

5. Moral judgment and moral action must be explained in terms that have no necessary relation to benevolence. Both are due to a blind impulse to bow down to authority,—the authority of the gods or God, of parents, or of public opinion. Our notions of right and wrong and the submission of the will to these notions all have their source in custom or allied phenomena. The grounds for this assertion are examined in Chapter XII.

6. The next objection is urged by an entirely different group of moralists from those who are impressed by the power of custom to shape moral ideals. These writers reject the theory under consideration primarily because they believe it incompatible with the objectivity of moral distinctions. How far this opinion is well founded I shall attempt to show in Chapter VIII.

7. Intimately allied with the preceding, but not necessarily identical with it, is the claim that the view which finds the roots of morality in desire is incompatible with the authority of the moral law. Chapter XXIII is devoted to a discussion of this subject. In connection with it Chapter XXI, pages 458 and following, should be read.

## VII

### What Are "the Same Conditions?"

The phrase *under the same conditions* (page 110) may present a difficulty since precisely the same conditions can never recur.

This indubitable fact rises to trouble the logician equally with the moralist, and the solution of the puzzle for each is the same. Right means the purpose which we desire everyone to adopt under *essentially* the same conditions; and what conditions are essentially the same, and what differences in the conditions are relevant depends upon the nature of the moral consciousness and the conditions under which it works. The moral judgment is a judgment about the location of values, positive and negative. Differences unrelated to value (or goods and evils) are irrelevant. All others may be relevant; that is to say, may make a difference in the answer. The only way to determine whether they do or not is to try. Thus in deciding the question whether a man was justified in picking my pocket, the size of his family and the economic conditions prevailing at the time might conceivably be a relevant consideration, but the color of his eyes and the initial letter of his name presumably would not.

### Gratitude Towards Self

There may be approbation of self as well as of others. It must consist in each case, when present in its completeness, of satisfaction and gratitude. It may sound odd to speak of gratitude towards self. But we have seen that there may be such a thing as resentment against self (Chapter II, page 31). We ought therefore not to be surprised at finding its antithesis. As a matter of fact a man must be very humble or else very weak-willed or very selfish never to have experienced a certain glow at some deed of his own, over and above the satisfaction he has felt in the result. This glow appears to be identical in nature with the gratitude, personal or impersonal, which we may feel towards others when they have done the right thing, especially under difficult circumstances.

### The Moral Judgment Is Not an Artificial Device Invented to Increase the Amount of Socially Useful Action

A person possessed of a desire for the good of others will wish his fellowmen to possess the same desire, since where it exists in any strength it does more for the creation of human happiness and the prevention of human misery than any other assignable

factor in life. For precisely the same reason he will rejoice to see his neighbors supplied with a fair share of regard for their own future welfare. Furthermore, his egoism will make him wish for the existence of altruism in others, and also for the possession on his own part of a strong regard for his own future ("self-control"). His altruism, if permanent and deep-seated, will also make him wish to possess so much altruism as will enable him, when the time of trial comes, to treat his neighbor as he wishes his fellow-men to treat this same neighbor. In other words, benevolence necessarily desires the existence of benevolence alike in others and in self. When a good man finds it expressing itself in action, he will feel satisfaction and thankfulness; when it fails to function when needed he will feel dissatisfaction and resentment. These are the essential features of the moral judgment and it is in this way that the eudemonic judgment arises.

What has here been said applies *mutatis mutandis* to the relationship between malevolence and the dysdemonic judgment. He who desires the harm of another will wish his fellows to share his attitude, will tend to rejoice when they do and to feel dissatisfaction and indignation when he finds the reverse. "Go on, my boy," said the cynical Timon to Alcibiades, "acquire the confidence of the people; you will one day, I foresee, be the cause of great calamities to them" (Plutarch, *Life of Alcibiades,* quoted in Hume, *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals,* Sec. V, part II).

Thus there is nothing artificial about the moral judgment. It is not a device invented or employed for the purpose of squeezing out of others conduct which is either personally or socially useful. It is a spontaneous reaction of the emotional nature, the inevitable consequence of the existence of certain desires. And while it may actually produce useful results through its appeal to men's approbativeness, it is no more directed in the first instance to the production of these results than is weeping to the creation of sympathetic concern on the part of spectators. The effects upon others' actions are thus nothing but by-products, however important these may happen to be in themselves. The contrary view, which seems to appeal to a surprisingly large

number of people, is a legacy handed down from Egoistic Utilitarianism (below, Chapter XVII) and its inherent absurdity is one of the many counts against that oversimplified system of ethics.

## VIII

### The Abuse of Names in Reasoning

I hope no one will claim that I have begged the question of objectivity by my adoption of the terms *objective* and *subjective valuation,* to say nothing of the later term, *favoritism.* These are mere tags, as all names should be, and could be replaced by X and Y and Z, without in any way affecting the conclusion. I should not have entered this *caveat* if I had not seen unbelievable instances of precisely this kind of argument. An opponent of Kantianism might argue as follows: An imperative is a command, and a command represents the desire of a ruler backed by threats which appeal to certain desires of the subjects. Therefore Kant's "categorical imperative" is based on desire and not on reason after all. If he should argue thus, he would be in company supposed to be respectable. But all he would actually have proved, assuming his definitions of *imperative* and *command* to be correct, would be that Kant's choice of a name for what he regarded as the central fact of the moral experience was not an entirely happy one.

### The Propriety of the Term "Subjective Valuation" as Applied to Judgments Due to Indifference

Since valuation involves interest and indifference means lack of interest, there may be a question as to the propriety of applying the term *subjective valuation* to a process at the basis of judgments which derive their character from indifference. Strictly speaking, no doubt, the use of the term under these conditions is inaccurate. I have retained it, however, in order to show that the mental act which it designates is merely the last member of a series which differs from its immediate predecessor only by the same amount as the latter from the one before it. Thus if, using an extremely crude illustration, we take the true value of a given state to be ten, a defective benevolence will

mark it down to nine, eight, seven, etc., according to the extent of its deficiency, and so on until it reaches two, one, and finally zero.

By subjective valuation I mean, at bottom, a certain attitude towards values, or goods and evils. What I am suggesting is that the zero point in this series of valuations may be regarded as still having a place in the series. Certain it is, in any event, that the indifferent man's judgment to the effect that the agent may do anything he likes in the premises, is determined by the way he (the judge) happens to feel—or happens not to feel—about the interests at stake, rather than by their objective importance, as measured by what each interest or set of interests means to its possessor. Such a judgment has its source, therefore, in what is essentially a subjective valuation.

### The Possibility of Escaping from a Subjective Valuation

In the face of the Becker case the members of the ethics classes who had exonerated Mr. Gye for tempting Miss Wagner to break her contract change their opinion with regard to his responsibility. In the face of Nathan's parable King David recognizes his own wickedness. As the result of the loss of his watermelon the schoolboy discovers the nature of theft (Chapter VI, page 98). These incidents may help us to answer in the concrete a question that may have occurred to some readers: "Is it possible ever to escape completely from a subjective valuation?" They show that at least some men have been able to view a situation with sufficient objectivity to pass a valid judgment. In each of these cases the suggestion that created the insight came from without. But it might equally well have sprung from the working of inner forces. The attainment of objectivity of vision is like drawing circles. No one ever drew a perfect one; but there are various degrees of approximation; and many are perfect for all practical purposes. In any event the definition of a circle is possible and useful, regardless of whether any human being ever drew a figure which completely conformed to it or not.

### Consistency in Law

The reference to consistency in law may appear a two-edged sword. Are not all the reformers crying that courts must no

longer be slaves in their decisions to a bare and mechanical consistency? The reason why men fear to attach too much weight to consistency in law is the feeling that the fundamental principles of our actual Anglo-American law ("the common law") are so inexact and incomplete that they are not fitted to be held to persistently. None the less the study of law will, I think, reveal the significance of consistency in life more impressively than any other discipline.

### The Validity of the Dysdemonic Judgment

The place of retaliation in a valid code is of so much theoretical and practical importance that I add one more consideration to those which were presented in the text.

The belief in the rightness of revenge and the belief that claims are a function of excellence (Chapter III, page 45) are but two applications of the same principle. According to the latter view A may with a good conscience injure B for his own benefit by lying to him, if B is inferior to him in character or intelligence or some other form of excellence. The law of retaliation merely goes one step farther in the same direction and declares—in effect—that A may injure B even though no profit (beyond the satisfaction of injuring him) thereby accrues to himself or anyone else, providing B has fallen below a certain standard of excellence by wronging him. The dysdemonic ideal is in fact merely one more example of the broad principle that people are to be treated according to the way you happen to feel towards them, rather than according to the nature and importance of their interests. In other words, it is at bottom a form of subjective valuation, and is therefore open to the criticisms urged against this point of view throughout the present Chapter.

There are moralists who have a far shorter method of getting rid of malevolence than that which I have employed. I have expressed the reasons for my inability to follow them in the Notes under Chapter XVI, page 515.

### Moral Imbecility and the Existence of a Universally Valid Code

The complete moral imbecile, if there be such a person—which is doubtful—is not a person with a different code from our own; he has no code whatever. He does not condemn anyone for inflicting suffering or loss upon others or himself; nor does he praise disinterested service as such (see above, Chapter V, pages 69, 73). His existence therefore, if he does exist, does not involve the intrusion of a new set of standards into our account of the moral judgments of the race but rather the dropping out of all judgments, as far as he is concerned. He thus presents to the moralist essentially no other problem than do the lower animals, the vast majority of which, probably all of which, are also quite innocent of any feeling of moral approbation or disapprobation.

### Two Conceptions of Objectivity:—A Note for Ethical Rationalists

In the notes to Chapter VI under Objection 6, I promised to attempt, at least, to show the relation of my account of the source of the moral judgment and the meaning of right to the doctrine of the objectivity of moral distinctions. I doubt whether a convinced Rationalist (see Chapter XVI, p. 305) will be satisfied with the conclusions reached in Chapter VIII, inasmuch as they involve no assertions whatever about the validity of our human code for all rational beings as such. I fear I shall have to add that this prospect does not disturb me in the least, since my theory was never worked out to please Rationalists. I start from certain observed facts. One is the layman's belief in objectivity, even though he would not know the meaning of the word if he heard it. But I leave open at the start just what this belief implies and whether it is true. To begin, however, as most Rationalists do (*e.g.*, Kant) by assuming that the moral law must appeal as authoritative to every rational being, *i.e.*, to everyone capable of understanding its injunctions, is to stake everything on one of those *a priori* assumptions which, whatever their form, have been the curse of ethics for generations. I have examined this particu-

lar assumption briefly in Chapter XVI, page 320. In Chapter XXI, pages 458 to 460, I have tried to show that without the psychological forces which create his moral ideals man would be so different from what he is that there would be no meaning in calling him a man. In Chapter XXIII, I have attempted to exhibit the claims of morality upon our loyalty as reasonable in the only sense of that term which seems to me to have any meaning when applied to the world of values. I believe this is as far as we can go in this direction; and in fact it is as far as I have any desire to go.

## IX

### Judgments of Outer Rightness Consist of an Estimate of Results and a Moral Judgment

It may be well to note explicitly that judgments of outer rightness consist normally of two assertions fused into one. They are as follows: (1) The action in question will produce such and such results, good or bad, upon such and such parties. (2) As between two conflicting interests, those of A have a higher claim to realization or protection than those of B. Thus in considering the outer rightness of giving poison to cancer patients if the judgment is to be final there must be (1) an accurate and complete representation of the effects upon all those who will be affected, including society at large; (2) a correct judgment as to whose interests are paramount. In passing upon the theft of Jean Valjean, who, as will be remembered, stole to save his sister and her children from starvation, two persons might agree completely in their estimate of the effects, and one condemn the act because he believed it would in the end do more harm than good to all concerned; whereas the other might approve because he considered a man's chief obligations to be to the members of his own family rather than to the greater good.

Those of us who hold that every interest constitutes as such a claim and that where interests conflict the greater good always has the superior claim, may easily overlook the presence of this second factor in our judgments of outer rightness. But it fails to attract our attention only because we never think of employing any of the competing standards.

We must not fail to note that since outer rightness is solely a matter of results the nature of the motive or motives which lead to its realization is irrelevant. Thus a man makes a promise and fulfils it to the letter. His motive may have been sordid or noble, his conduct is none the less outwardly right.

## X

### The Explanation of the Difference in Our Attitude Towards a Good Man and a Good Piece of Furniture

The facts presented in this Chapter seem to me to account in great part for the difference in our feeling towards a good man and a convenient chest of drawers (see Appendix, Notes on Chapter VI, page 496, under 3). If our explanation is to be complete, however, one factor not as yet mentioned must be taken into account, namely, resentment and thankfulness. Originally, as we saw in Chapter V, these emotions go out, or tend to go out to material objects with about the same abandon as to human beings. What these impulses crave, however, is to give pain or pleasure. But this of course is impossible in the case of material objects. Hence, recognizing the futility of our impulses in these directions, we tend to bring our outward manifestations, at least, under control. Thereupon enters the law of atrophy—that which is unexpressed dies. As a consequence material objects tend, as a man grows older, to become less and less the objects of resentment and thankfulness, and thus our attitude towards them becomes ever more sharply differentiated from that towards harm-bringing and helpful human beings. (*Cf.* Chapter XIII, page 250.)

## XII

### The Source of the Australian Class System

There has naturally been a great deal of speculation as to the source of the Australian class system, much of it more ingenious than convincing. The clue to the mystery, however, seems to have been supplied by Professor A. R. Radcliffe-Brown. In the article quoted in the text and in other papers he has shown more completely and conclusively than anyone else that these marriage

laws have their source in a single requirement, namely, that a man must marry a woman bearing a certain relationship of consanguinity to him. He has further shown that the resulting systems are reducible to two. In one, cross-cousins, or the children of a brother and a sister, must marry; in the other, the children of cross-cousins who are of the same sex, *i.e.*, certain of the grandchildren of a brother and sister. The former requirement, which is that of only a very few tribes, produces a four-fold division (the "four-class system"); the second, which is the dominant one, produces the "eight-class system," like that of the Arunta. I think it is easy to see how these regulations might have come into existence in a very simple way. All marriage is constantly threatening to break families into dispersed and unrelated fragments. Cousin marriage brings or keeps them together. The marriage of parallel cousins would indeed fulfil this function equally as well as the union of cross-cousins; but it would destroy the clan system, according to which husband and wife are necessarily members of different clans (as parallel cousins are not), and descent is counted either from the one or the other. And the clan system, however it arose, is commonly felt to be something very precious by primitive man. It is true that in a certain sense the clan system does not exist in Australia. Nevertheless the moiety plays to a large extent the rôle of the clan, and cross-cousin marriage is as necessary for the preservation of the one as the other. This, then, is the case in behalf of the marriage of cross-cousins. On the other hand, the marriage of all cousins is demonstrably very repulsive to the incest antipathies of many savages; and there is evidence that this is true in most parts of Australia. The marriage of the grandchildren of sisters and brothers, apparently, does not arouse this feeling, while at the same time it contributes something towards the unity of the family. It thus represents a compromise between conflicting considerations. Such a compromise need not be the product of deliberate reflection. It may have come into existence in any one of a number of different ways as the result of the mutual pressure of incompatible ideals.

## XIII

### The Nature of Volition and Desire

While it is true that Determinism and Indeterminism are not bound up with any particular theory of the will, nevertheless the age-long conflict between these ancient rivals has been due in part to defective conceptions of the nature of volition. Many Indeterminists believe that the only alternative to their own position is a view of deliberation and choice which they correctly perceive to be false. And their attempts to replace it with something better have too often taken the form of accepting the foundation and trying to make over the superstructure. More serious, in my opinion, is the fact that many Determinists have taken them at their word, and have adopted a thoroughly perverted view of the process of volition as the supposed necessary consequence of their Determinism. The purpose of Chapter XIII has been not so much to argue for Determinism as to consider the relation between it and moral responsibility. Nevertheless the confusion of mind which exists with regard to the psychology of choice and volition appears to me so serious a matter that I can not refrain from presenting the analysis of the process which self-observation seems to me to warrant. When it has been cleared up, I believe, one of the most formidable arguments for Indeterminism will disappear of itself.

Most mistaken accounts of volition start from a false idea of the relation of desire to the rest of our conscious life. Our desires are all too frequently conceived as forces outside of ourselves, pushing us hither and thither as a log in a stream may be driven about by contending currents. "The mind is a balance," writes Priestley, in the "Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity," (*Works*, Edition of 1782, Vol. III, p. 485), "which [is] inclined this way or that according to the motives presented to it." The desires are here thought of as weights in pans. "The mind," says a popular lecturer, "is a mechanism driven forward by its desires. Certain powerful forces called love of power or friendship act upon it as winds upon a ship." Now if there is anything obvious to unbiased observation it is that my desire for power

or companionship is no more outside of me than my love for my child or my hatred of a crook, my sorrow at a failure or my joy at a success. In fact my desires are so completely an integral part of myself that their nature characterizes me more adequately than any other part of my mind. And if we may speak of desires struggling within us for the mastery, then we must say with Hegel: "I am at once the combatants and the conflict and the field that is torn with the strife."

This view of desire paves the way, it seems to me, for a much simpler and more transparent notion of what happens in decision or choice than is commonly found in the books. The ordinary view apparently assumes that the two entities or groups of entities called desires come before some third highly mysterious entity, usually called the "will," and are looked over, as two applicants for a position might be passed upon by a prospective employer or two cuts of steak by a housewife. Thereupon, after due inspection, one is selected. Or, in another version, one of these desires drives the other from the field and then, having everything to itself, proceeds to take possession of the appropriate muscles. But the first description leaves us with a still unanalyzed account of choice on our hands, so that we are no nearer a knowledge of what choice is than we were before. And the second description is not an account of choice at all; at least it is nothing better than Hobson's choice. For choice, like comparison, means that both alternatives are in the mind at one time. A conflict of desires may sometimes end with one combatant dropping from consciousness—that is to say, being forgotten—and leaving the field free to its rival. But this merely shows that deliberation may terminate otherwise than by an act of choice. When choice does occur, it is choice between alternatives present to the mind at the time.

What actually happens will be clear, I think, if we picture to ourselves the exact situation in which the chooser finds himself. Janet, in *Janet's Repentance*, wants the brandy, or rather the relief from mental anguish which the brandy will afford; at the same time she wants certain other things which for convenience may be brought together under the term self-respect. Call the first group A and the second B. Now the situation which she

faces is this: She can have A, but only at the cost of B, and *vice versa*. And this situation puts to her a question which can be formulated thus: "Here is (+ A — B); do you want it, or not?" A man is in financial difficulties from which he can extricate himself only by selling his house. Taken by itself, he does not want to lose his home. But the question before him is: "Do you or do you not want to save yourself from bankruptcy at the cost of losing your house?" Finally take the incident used by Locke to prove the necessity of distinguishing between volition and desire. "A man, whom I can not deny, may oblige me to use persuasions to another, which, at the same time I am speaking, I may wish may not prevail on him." (*Essay concerning Human Understanding*, Book II, ch. 21, sec. 30). Here the object of my desire is pleasing one man at the risk of persuading another to do something which in itself I desire he should not do.

Thus decision and choice can be explained in terms of desire. Choice is the desire for a complex whole, a part of which, *in itself*, arouses aversion. Deliberation is the process of "making up one's mind," that is to say, discovering what one really wants under the conditions. If our business man decides to sell, this means that, being in the position in which he now is, he desires the total consequences of the sale, since for him it is all or none; and if his sole prospective customer concludes in the end not to buy, he may be plunged into black despair.

The issue between Determinism and Indeterminism is accordingly in every case: Has this desire,—either for some single end or system of ends,—a cause? With this insight disappears, it seems to me, the Indeterminist argument from the immediate consciousness of freedom. I at least can make nothing out of this alleged consciousness unless it is either an assertion of freedom of action which is then confused with freedom of indetermination, or else a repudiation of the log-in-the-stream analogy. If the latter, it is certainly true in what it denies; but this, I need hardly say, does not necessarily render it satisfactory in what it affirms.

We hear much about choice being determined by the stronger motive. But even on the log-in-the-stream theory this statement is quite meaningless. In the final spurt of a long-distance race the more intense feelings, if obeyed, would make us drop in our

tracks; in the dentist's chair the more intense feeling would make us cut and run. Strength therefore can not mean intensity of feeling. The only possible criterion of strength is success in producing action. So that to say that choice is determined by the stronger motive is merely saying it is determined by the motive which determines it. Since even this seemingly innocuous proposition carries with it the implication that desires are forces outside of us, it had better be dropped altogether.

I started by promising to analyze volition, and I have devoted all my attention to choice. What is the relation between them? Choice now appears as a case of desire, so that the problem becomes one of the relation of desire and volition. Volition, I take it, consists in a desire, with an idea of the means by which the desired end may be attained, and the belief that the means are in my power. When these factors are all present and the time has come to act, the muscles start contracting and motion begins.

If the core of volition is desire, what then is desire?

In desire (which I use as synonymous with wish) there is first the idea of a certain state of things. The thing desired may be, of course, the continuance of the present state or the coming into existence of some state other than the present one. In addition there is an element which I may call welcoming the state, or where loss or suffering is inevitable, consenting to its existence. The obscurity which pervades the subject lies in this second factor.

In certain very simple instances, indeed, the nature of the desiring process seems unmistakable. A boarding-school boy takes the first train for home at the beginning of his Christmas vacation. The idea of being at home (and not being at school) is accompanied with intense satisfaction. On the other hand, the idea of being compelled to remain in the school dormitory during the vacation, if it should loom as a real possibility, would produce the liveliest feeling of dissatisfaction. Ordinarily, then, to welcome seems to involve a feeling of satisfaction at the thought of attainment, and dissatisfaction at the thought of the possibility of failure to attain. Similarly, consent seems to include ordinarily so much satisfaction as one finds in the thought of escape from the greater of two evils.

A serious complication is introduced into our subject, however, by the fact that what all of us would undoubtedly call desire may determine the contraction of muscles without the presence in consciousness of any discoverable satisfaction; and, providing the thought of non-realization does not present itself, without dissatisfaction. I have discussed this phenomenon in criticizing the view that strength, in the sense of tendency to produce action, is equivalent to intensity. It seems to me that the feeling element in many of the ordinary actions which we should all agree to call desired or willed, and which the courts would certainly treat as voluntary, may drop to zero or near zero—and that, even when the desire comes into conflict with fierce organic pains.

In the face of these facts what is more natural than to describe desire as consisting in the bare idea of a state of things, or this plus the belief that I am going to bring its object into existence? This account, however, would obliterate the distinction between desired acts and those to which I am indifferent or even hostile. An example of the former is afforded by many forms of ideo-motor action. I may see a pin on the floor and pick it up, not from a love of neatness but merely because the object suggested the action and no other psychological force intervened to inhibit it. An example of the latter is any one of a number of pathological conditions such as homicidal mania, where a man may produce results with his own hands against which in the very moment of performance his whole nature revolts. We recall the case of the man who warned his wife to flee while he was seizing the butcher-knife with which to kill her. He knew what he was about to do and did not want to do it. Ribot in Chapter II of *Diseases of the Will*, and James in his *Principles of Psychology*, Volume II, p. 542, ff., give many other illustrations of this phenomenon. The same thing is true of normal life. I may know that I am going to close my eyes when you poke your finger at them. But my knowledge does not constitute desire. This example is taken from the field of instinct, but the principle applies equally to non-instinctive conduct.

Perhaps we shall be able to extricate ourselves from the impasse in which we now seem to be caught if we examine a little more carefully what happens in those numerous instances where

desire is detached from action. If a man were asked whether he desired wealth, power, fame, or what not, he might truthfully reply, "Yes," although conscious of no emotion whatever at the moment. In affirming the existence of desire he might mean—however difficult he found the task of formulation—that he knows he would be feeling satisfaction if certain conditions were present, such as the actual possibility of attainment, reinforced perhaps by nearness of fruition; or, on the other hand, if certain other factors were absent, such as the absorption of mental energy by some entirely different subject (*cf.* the analysis of approbation in Chapter VII, page 112). The philosopher Jacobi writes to certain friends as follows: "I am profoundly convinced, my dear friends, that I love you without ceasing. But I must confess to you that at this moment I feel very little of it, so cruelly have I been tried yesterday and today [by petty vexations]." (Beneke, *Praktische Philosophie,* Vol. I, p. 597.) It is in precisely this same sense that I desire at this moment of writing the good of my children.

To welcome, then, or to consent, involves (1) the absence of dissatisfaction at the prospect of the reality of the state; and, since this by itself does not go beyond indifference, (2) either actual satisfaction in the thought of its realization, or the belief that this thought will at some time afford satisfaction or—what will often be the same thing—that it would afford satisfaction at this moment if it were not for counteracting influences.

If this account of the matter be true and there may be desire without present feeling, whether of satisfaction at the prospect of attainment or dissatisfaction at the prospect of failure, what is the nature of the motive power by which, in desire, ideas pass over into action? Why is it that the idea of possessing, say, a certain kind of knowledge, may in one man lead to long-continued labor which is deaf to the distracting call of amusements, is proof against the grinding pressure of monotony, conquers fatigue, laughs at the attractions of wealth; while in another person this same idea is totally without influence? We can, of course, make the beginnings of an answer by invoking such stimulants as concreteness, with its appeal to the imagination. But in the end

we shall find ourselves face to face with ultimate facts, as far as our present insight is concerned.

I myself should look for the explanation in the workings of physiological forces. Desire, it seems to me, is a psycho-physiological process; and the grip of one idea and the impotence of another has its source in the workings of the brain. Certainly the solution of the mystery is not to be found in anything which consciousness itself directly reports. But however we interpret the facts, we must certainly abandon Locke's theory that action follows "the more pressing uneasiness," including all its modern improvements. (*Essay concerning Human Understanding,* Book II, ch. 21, sec. 31). One single bit of evidence seems to me sufficient to annihilate it. Repetition, or habit, notoriously strengthens the power of an idea to produce action, while at the same time it lowers the intensity of the accompanying feeling tone. This reference to physiological forces will appear to some people as materialism. It is not materialism in the proper sense of the word, for materialism asserts that consciousness is matter, which is one of the most patent absurdities ever uttered by man. It does undoubtedly assert the dependence of the coming and going of conscious states upon the motion of material particles in the brain. But what is matter? No one has ever refuted Berkeley's annihilating criticism of our ordinary notions of matter. To say that the mind is dependent upon the material world is simply to say what every Determinist must believe that our entire conscious life, including the will, is an organic part of the universe, "bone of its bone and flesh of its flesh." What this means we can not know till we understand the nature of the Universe. While we wait for this consummation we must recognize that the dependence of mind on brain does not destroy our individuality in the sense that it blots out those personal characteristics that we think of as making each of us what he is. The planets are made up of materials which came originally, it is supposed, from the sun. But each has a marked individuality of its own. And whatever the explanation, the conscious life of each one of us has a uniqueness of which the best analogies supplied by the world of nature are but a pale reflection.

## XV

### Rights and Duties as Correlative

The assertion of the text that every right is a right as against some person or party and accordingly that A's rights are necessarily B's duties does not completely harmonize with popular linguistic usage. Thus I may say with perfect propriety that I have a right to spend my evenings playing bridge if I choose. Here no duty whether of action or forbearance is asserted of other persons. What the speaker means is that it is morally indifferent for him to occupy his time in this way. If, then, we take everyday forms of speech as our standard, there are certainly rights to which no duties correspond. But popular speech must never be used as the ultimate criterion for terminology in science. Here meanings must have consistency. Otherwise we fall into the excesses of those who, for example in psychology, use such terms as *instinct*, *perception*, and *reason* in the multifarious ways of the street, to the confusion of their readers and the destruction of their own clarity of vision. In ethics, then, as in every other science, we ought to choose one definition and stick to it. The choice in this instance can not be difficult. The most fundamental meaning is that which makes a right the correlative of a duty, and for ethics this must remain the only meaning.

## XVI

### "Judgments of Congeniality" and the Law of Retaliation

The man in whom love of his neighbor is exceptionally strong and in whom resentment is not easily aroused will have his own way of solving the puzzles of Chapter VIII about the law of retaliation. He will directly "abhor" revenge and as such condemn it, and "there's an end." In this he is supplying one more illustration of the Aristotelian method. But what will he say when he meets a man like Edward Fry, who is quoted—with approval—by Charles Mercier, in his *Criminal Responsibility*, p. 13, as follows: "Here we seem to be near a fundamental fact of human nature, a moral element incapable of farther analysis, so far at

least as my chemistry goes,—the fact that there is a fitness of suffering to sin, that the two things, injustice and pain, which are both contrary to our nature, ought to go together." Each man judges on the basis of the congeniality of a certain spirit to his own, and the two reach diametrically opposed positions from which they can only make faces at each other. If ethics is ever to become a science instead of a mere series of autobiographies it must resolve just such conflicts of feeling as this. It can do so only in one of two ways. First, it may adopt Subjectivism, with its substitution of an artifact for the actual judgments of the ordinary laymen which it professes to be describing. In this case both judges are right, and they must not gird at each other. If this alternative is rejected, ethics must penetrate to a level of the moral consciousness where both parties are in agreement, and from here reason to a conclusion which is subject to the laws of logic just as truly as is any other concatenated series of ideas.

## XVII

### Richard Cumberland

Professor Sidgwick holds a view of Cumberland's theory of the good, which if it were correct would necessitate classifying him as an Aristotelian rather than a Utilitarian. Referring to the assertion in the *Laws of Nature* that "the common good will be the supreme law," Sidgwick writes, in the *History of Ethics*, p. 173: "It is important to notice that in his 'good' is included not merely happiness in the ordinary sense but 'perfection'; and he does not even define perfection so as strictly to exclude from it the notion of moral perfection or virtue, and save his explanation of morality from an obvious logical circle." I have criticized this interpretation in an article on Cumberland in *Mind*, Vol. 37 (N. S. 21), pp. 376-379.

## XIX

### The Meaning and Content of Good

In this note I propose to supplement my treatment in the text of the meaning and content of the concept "good." I shall speak

throughout only of intrinsic goodness, and confine myself chiefly to the problem of meaning.

The good can not be defined as "the desired as such." Julius Cæsar ardently desired posthumous fame. But I have never met anyone willing to affirm that his fame is a good to him now. Of forty persons interviewed only one was willing to entertain the idea that Huxley's prize was a good for him under the described conditions. If consistency has anything to do with ideas of good and evil, the same attitude towards a third possibility should be equally widespread. When No Neck, an Apsaroke warrior, sent his son Iron Eyes out on the war path he said: "My son, when your friends have fear on their faces and weep within themselves, and run this way and that before the enemy, stay behind and fight! Do not come back! Death comes and you cannot leap over him. I want to cry before I am old." The father was granted his heart's desire. His son fell in battle. Every night thereafter he sat in his lodge and cried out: "Iron Eyes, Iron Eyes, I did not know it would be so heavy or I would not have said what I said. I thought it was a good thing when I said, Stay behind! But my son it is bad."[1]

It may be replied, as it has been, that the conception of desire embodied in these examples is too narrow. Desire, it may be urged, should include not merely a certain attitude toward future experiences but also towards present ones. I myself should prefer to use the term *approbation* in this case, but from the point of view which I am defending the name is of little importance. This position seems to me an enormous advance over the preceding. The test of goodness is now sought in experience rather than in the promises of a mendacious imagination. Nevertheless this view will not serve, for the moralist who accepts it as affording an adequate definition must be prepared to affirm that an experience is good only in so far as it contains the consciousness of a realized desire. Now desire involves the idea of a certain state as real, with accompanying satisfaction or dissatisfaction, as the case may be. Accordingly, on this view, music can be a good for me only in so far as while listening to it I at the same time hold before me

[1] Curtis, Edward S., *The North American Indians*, Vol. IV, p. 97.

the thought of its attainment and feel the consequent satisfaction. If, then, the sweep and majesty of the symphony should drive from the mind the thought and the particular satisfaction which this thought of attainment affords, the music would instantly lose its value for me. I can not conceive that anyone who realized its implications would make such an assertion.

These data seem to warrant the conclusion that the good is not the desired as such. Nevertheless all the facts point to an intimate relationship between the two. Justice will be done to these conflicting considerations, I believe, if the good is defined, not as "the desired," but as "the desirable." I am aware that this term has been shamelessly misused. I shall try, however, to give it a definite connotation.

The good, then, is in the first place, that which would be desired if any conscious attitude were assumed towards the experience, one way or the other. That is to say the good is a certain characteristic of experiences, of such a nature that when it (the characteristic) is thought about in the moment of experience (or in accurate retrospection) it tends to arouse a feeling of satisfaction. I say tends to arouse, rather than arouses, for precisely the same reasons that led to a similar terminology in Chapter VII, p. 112, with regard to the relation of approbation and right.

This definition, however, is not complete. To appreciate the significance of its second constituent we must note that desire may be evoked by mutually incompatible ends. This fact played an important rôle in Chapter II. We there saw that I may desire the good and the harm of human beings. We saw, furthermore, in Chapter VIII that an ideal must consist of mutually compatible parts; it must be internally self-consistent. When desired ends are essentially in conflict, as are for example the ends demanded by benevolence and malevolence respectively, one set must be taken and the other left, and all such choices must follow some consistent principle.

Now there may also be conflict between other desired objects besides volitions. An example is the desire for some experience (whatever it may be), on the one hand, and the desire for that which is not and never will be a part of one's experience, on the

other. In the concrete, a man crucifies his desires for comfort and his aversions from the pains of hunger and cold in order that he may save money with which to buy a grave of his own. Those objects of actual or potential desire (as the term *potential desire* is used just above) are goods which can form parts of a self-consistent system. This means that they must conform to some principle to which it would be possible to adhere throughout one's life.

This principle can not be the mere fact that the objects in question are desired, so that the good at any moment is exhaustively definable as that which chances at that moment to be most intensely desired. Inconsistency means inconsistency of desire; and if the mere presence of desire can constitute a system of values consistent, there is no such thing as inconsistency; since the term, by common consent, is a predicate of volitions, and the essence of volition, as we have seen, is desire. Inconsistency of desires means inconsistency or incompatibility in the objects which arouse the desires, since it is only these objects that are mutually destructive. Now consistency, we remember, is simply persistency in the use of a principle. This principle, if good is to be defined in terms of desire, must represent my settled preference when I recognize clearly the incompatibility of different objects of desire and when the alternatives are either present in their completeness simultaneously in the same experience or are represented in retrospective imagination with perfect accuracy, while no factors extraneous to the issue exercise a disturbing influence upon the outcome (see above, p. 516). If these conditions can not be met in actual life it remains true that the presumption that the judgment of value is valid increases in proportion to the extent to which they obtain.

Incorporating this last provision into our definition it reads as follows: "Any given experience or element of an experience is good (1) in so far as its actual or accurately imagined possession either gives me satisfaction or would do so if its possession became an object of thought, and conflicting forces did not inhibit its arousal; and (2) in so far as it is capable of finding a place in a consistent system of desired objects, where the cri-

terion of consistency is conformity to my settled preferences as determined under the conditions just described."

I am not yet ready to discuss the content of the good, but for the sake of concreteness of presentation I will remind the reader that I find this harmonizing element in pleasure. Thereupon enters, in my case at least, another phenomenon which I have already described. When I squarely face the incompatibility of certain of my desires with my fundamental principle of valuation, they lose their attractive power. This phenomenon is not perhaps essential, and certainly the fundamentals of my analysis would remain what they are without it. How widespread it is I do not know. I present the fact, however, as a possible contribution to the psychology of the valuing process.

A serious obstacle to the acceptance of such a conception of value as the preceding is the assumption that the good is something which, in one way or another, operates upon desire, does something to it, so that the desire must be present where good is in order that it may be on hand for the operation. An illustration is the view of T. H. Green (or at any rate one of his views) according to which good is what satisfies desire in the sense of putting an end to or destroying it. This of course is the foundation of Buddhistic and Schopenhauerian pessimism, though Green does not appear to be aware of it; but this fact does not concern us here. What does concern us is the fact that this position involves an impossible conception of desire. The desire is represented as aiming at its own annihilation. But before a desire can be annihilated—to say nothing of wishing to be annihilated—it must exist; and it must exist as a desire for something. To call this something annihilation is the same kind of error as that exposed in Chapter V, the notion, namely, that a desire can be aroused by the prospect of enjoying the feelings which will be aroused by its attainment. All the definitions of *good* which explicitly or otherwise represent it as an operation performed upon a desire, or a change produced in the substance of a desire, are open to the same criticism.

A number of contemporary moralists who see that the *good* can not be defined merely as the desired have struck into a

path very different from that which I have followed. They hold that *good* is a unique term entirely incapable of analysis. There is nothing intrinsically impossible in this view. I can not, indeed, conceive how anyone could be influenced by the positive arguments that have been put forth in its favor. Its strength, however, lies in its criticism of opposing views. But a conclusion based upon mere negations is always a dangerous one, at the best; and apart from this and other considerations, the good and the desired are too intimately intertwined for their relationship to be a mere matter of accident.

Turning to the problems presented by the content of the good, my chief reasons for identifying this content with pleasure are two in number. For one thing I believe that whereas the Hedonistic conception of values can be carried through consistently, no other can. To show this would require a criticism of other attempts for which I have no space. Chapters XIX and XX contain suggestions as to the nature of the inconsistencies into which, in one way or another, Anti-Hedonistic theories inevitably fall.

My second reason is that stated at length in the text. I do not intend to repeat it, and refer to it only that I may deal with a possible objection. On interviewing a considerable number of persons I find so many of them denying the value of attained desire in the absence of pleasures that in themselves they represent a striking phenomenon; and the approach to unanimity turns out to be so close that a strong presumption arises that the apparent exceptions are due to a failure on my part to get to the bottom of their processes of valuation.

To this contention it may be replied that many students of ethics declare in the most explicit terms that certain hedonically indifferent elements of experience appeal to them as good. By what right, it may be asked, is their testimony disregarded? I answer, because, in my opinion, their assertions rest upon a confusion in the use of terms. This confusion consists in a failure to distinguish between a thing and its causes. Thus the pleasant taste of candy is one thing; the smiling, dancing glee of the child in possession of the candy, is another. On the other hand there are experiences of a different kind. My satisfaction in

telling the latest gossip to a friend who has been absent from town for some time is not satisfaction in a pleasure-containing action; it is a pleasure in a bare action.

Now call the child's sensation of sweetness and the concomitant pleasure Oa, and the act of communicating gossip Ob. The Anti-Hedonistic fallacy consists in calling both O's good and supposing the word to be used in each case in the same sense, whereas the place of pleasure (P), whose relation to the good we are seeking to determine, is very different in each. For Oa contains P, but Ob causes P. Let the communication take place without pleasure (as too often happens) and, judged in retrospect or whenever you will, Ob will not longer be regarded as a good. Let the glee vanish because of absorption in the pleasures of taste and Oa has lost none of its goodness, though the state of the child as a whole is the poorer from the loss of the emotional reaction. If then we are to distinguish between what is and what causes we must not call mental elements which cause pleasure good in the same sense in which we call pleasure good. One is extrinsically good and the other intrinsically good. But it is intrinsic good whose nature we are here seeking to determine.

I shall of course be told that all this is the crassest atomism, or that I am playing with abstractions to which no reality corresponds. To this I reply that, atomism or no atomism, the state in which a boy gets the pleasurable taste of candy and at the same time rejoices in his attained desire for candy is possible, and, where uncles are about, is often actual; and that in thinking of ObP, I can distinguish between Ob as indifferent and P as valuable just as easily as when looking at a painting I can admire the coloring and be indifferent towards the drawing, or *vice versa*.

The fact of the matter is, this argument about the impossibility of desiring abstractions is itself a glaring instance of abstract thinking. For in reality I *never* desire anything but abstractions. I go into the dining-room to get an apple. The idea which leads me thither is certainly an abstraction, unless I can not want an apple except as I first have in mind the exact length of its three axes, its exact shape, its exact weight, the

exact pattern of the colors on its skin, and a hundred or a thousand other characteristics. What is actually before my mind is the idea of a member of the plant world which, within somewhat vaguely defined limits, will meet certain specifications. But these, even when most complete, are very far short of the fullness of concrete qualities which make up the apple I eat. And from apples to paintings I can single out individual qualities of objects and approve or disapprove them although the qualities may be no more capable of existing alone than length without breadth or color.

## XX

### Some Criticisms of Hedonism

Much of the criticism leveled against Hedonism reminds me of the preëlection speeches of politicians scoring the opposing party. Amidst all this hubbub, however, there may be heard a small number of very important objections. Some of these have been discussed either explicitly or by implication in the text or in the preceding Note. There remain three which seem to me well worth our consideration. I propose to examine each in turn.

In the first place, then, it is urged that pleasure as such can not be good because there are certain pleasures which are by common consent bad. An example is the pleasures of satisfied malice. By this is not meant that these pleasures are æsthetically repellent—or if it is, I have said all I have to say on the subject in the text of this Chapter; when they are called bad, this is apparently to be understood as morally bad. To this I reply that there can be no bad pleasures if bad is used in its moral signification. Bad morally, in the proper sense of the term, are volitions and nothing else. "A bad pleasure" can therefore only be an ill chosen name for the result of a wrong volition. The reason why we call the pleasure itself bad is because we do not like to think of the malicious or the revengeful as enjoying the fruits of their wrong-doing. There are a number of reasons for this, all sufficiently obvious. One of them is our own malevolence; and the better we are, *up to a certain limit*, the more intensely will our indignation glow. But what is harrowing our feelings all this

time is the belief that having sown evil in the lives of others they themselves are reaping good in their own. So that our dislike of the spectacle is effective testimony to our conviction that their pleasure is a good. It is indeed an evil for us, with our feeling of malevolence towards them; but a bad experience in me may coexist with and, more than this, be the consequent of a good experience in someone else. The fact, therefore, that I wish it gone does not prove it bad for its possessor. Pleasures, then, are intrinsically good for the man whose they are, even though they be the product of conduct which we condemn. If we do not want such pleasures for ourselves, the reason is none other than that which makes us refuse to seek the rewards of thievery. It is of the very essence of the moral ideal that it may demand the sacrifice of some things for others. And we reject for ourselves the malevolent character simply because we are willing to give up certain goods in order to realize ends which we value more highly.

It is contended, in the second place, by the critics of Hedonism that there are goods which are not pleasurable, or at least not pleasurable in proportion to their goodness. The conventional examples are truth and beauty. "Everyone would admit," writes Bertrand Russell (*Philosophical Essays*, p. 56) "that the pleasure of poetry is a greater good than the pleasure of bathing on a hot day; but few people can honestly say it is more intense." To this I reply by deliberately placing myself outside of the class in which "everyone" is to be found, and flatly refusing to admit that the pleasure of poetry is a greater good for every man, woman, and child in the world than the pleasure of bathing on a hot day. I should go farther and assert that there seem to be those for whom beauty is not a good at all. It is our duty to seek the good of those we love. Is it, then, my duty to force my son to listen to poetry or music, as an acquaintance of mine once did, when he detests it? If I really love poetry, as poetry can be loved, it will give me far more pleasure, at its best, than any bath I ever took. And if this is the way I feel, I shall want my son to love it too, and shall make every effort to develop in him an appreciation of its charms. But if I ultimately become convinced that the potentialities of

this capability have been denied him either largely or totally I shall leave the boy alone, if I have any sense whatever, and let him swim in peace. Even for me, a lover of poetry, the poetry and the bath are not necessarily competitors. For reading poetry may eventually tire me; thereupon the bath may become *for the time* my chief good. The good involves the cooperation of two factors, a stimulus and a response having its source in inner powers. To him in whom this second factor of appreciation is totally lacking the corresponding experience can not be a good. By parity of reasoning, to him in whom it is more or less rudimentary, the experience can be at most what I may call a moderate good.

There are several reasons why this platitude is denied by Anti-Hedonistic moralists. For the kind of men who write papers and books on ethics, a person of æsthetic sensibilities is a more pleasing object of contemplation, as seen from the parquet, and also a more congenial companion than your dull-eyed Philistine. Furthermore insensibility to poetry means a life just so much poorer in a world where we can not afford to throw away any good that might be ours. But the chief reason, I believe, is of a different order. It is the fear that this same process will be applied to character, and that, for some moralists, would mean the wreckage of morality. I shall deal with this difficulty immediately.

The third objection against Hedonism is that it is incompatible with the intrinsic value of character. This objection rests upon a complete misapprehension of Hedonism and the nature of the immediate attractiveness of character. If character is beautiful and the value of beauty lies in its pleasurableness, then character, as Shaftesbury insisted, must have a hedonic value. It is true that the hedonic value of beauty has been denied. I can not undertake to argue the matter here against the Romanticism to which it is an intuition of reason that "all that is best in the world must come from somewhere outside of the world," bringing its values with it from this realm of shadows. I can only assert with the greatest vigor that this intuition—or beatific vision, or what you will—has not been vouchsafed to everyone; and that those of us who are outside

the circle of the elect can not be expected to accept its pronouncements even on the authority of those who claim to have inside information.

The difference in the attitude of Hedonists and Perfectionists towards beauty of character appears in Aristotle's judgments on courage (Chapter XVI, page 323). Logically, he ought to have applauded the Chinese king who set fire to his ship; perhaps he would have, had he known of it. For Hedonism, on the other hand, beauty of character must in the main ever be a by-product of the pursuit or protection of other values—the precious by-product of a situation which in many instances we ought to do our best to avert. For great and spectacular sacrifices are not desirable unless necessary, and the necessity is ordinarily to be deplored (*Cf.* Meinong, *Untersuchungen zur Werththeorie*, p. 178). Thus moral beauty is in many cases a good proceeding from an evil, and a good which, if pursued, usually ceases to be a good.

No, Hedonism is not incompatible with the recognition of the intrinsic value of character. But its critics are right in one of their most important contentions. The intrinsic value of character, for it, can never be absolute. By absolute I mean (1) either universally recognized or rightfully claiming universal recognition; and (2) so far superior to other goods as to be incommensurable with them. This is the difficulty referred to above, and in my opinion it is the chief stumbling block for many people in the way of the acceptance of the theory. A state of consciousness, I have insisted,—and Hedonists can take no other position—gets its value from the interaction of two factors, an outer and an inner, the inner being a capacity for appreciation. It is certain that there are many people about us whose chief interest is not character. Provided they have no potentialities in this direction—a supposition, however, almost certainly contrary to fact—then for Hedonism there would be no intelligible sense in which character could be said to have for them intrinsic value, except as they would be better off if they possessed sensitiveness to its attractions. And since the gray is more common than the black or the white, the conclusion follows that for the average man character is indeed one of the intrinsic values—

since he will wish to be able to think well of himself—but does not necessarily occupy the highest place.

To some persons such a doctrine represents the annihilation of all morality. It *is* annihilation, from the point of view of the Egoistic schools of the type of Aristotle and the Stoics. An Egoism which is trying to justify morality rather than to destroy it must hold that the interests of self and others are identical; and must accordingly either claim with Epicurus that honesty and the other virtues are the best policy in the ordinary commonplace meaning of policy; or they must attribute to character an intrinsic value superior to all the other good things of life, independently of how much the possessor may happen to care for it himself. In this way only can right be completely identified with the consistent pursuit of personal good.

But if one accepts the view of right for which this book contends, there is no necessity of carrying any such load as the preceding supposition involves. For morality consists, not in the thoroughgoing pursuit of personal good, but in the direct recognition of the claims upon us of the good of others, and the ability to respond to this call without any thought of what there is in it for us. This ability is a basic fact of human nature, regardless of whether character be the sole good, the chief good, or even no good at all (I mean throughout intrinsic good). It is an intrinsic good for most persons; the most precious of goods for some. And this is well for a number of reasons; among others because the sense of its value supplies the moral ideal with a powerful ally. But it is not the essence of morality, and morality could, if necessary, exist without it.

## XXI

### Reflective and Unreflective Benevolence

The text has pointed out the difference between reflective and unreflective desire, the former consisting in a desire for that which is in the moment of desiring regarded as a good, the latter going directly out to certain states without any consideration of their goodness. These diverse phenomena raise the question of the adequacy of our account of egoism and altruism in Chapter V.

Egoism was there defined as a desire for my good; it is interested in the realization of my desires only in so far as that realization promises the attainment of an experience which will be good. The same is true of altruism. But I may have, in addition, a desire for the realization of my non-reflective desires. Thus at some given point of time my "communicativeness," *i.e.*, my desire to talk, may be temporarily satisfied; I may be "talked out" for the present. But foreseeing the recurrence of the desire although it is now dormant and has therefore for the present lost its motive power, I may make arrangements for a companion on tomorrow's walk whose ears will serve as a target for my sound waves. This means that I now desire the realization of a tomorrow's desire. The same is true of the desires of other people. Thus I may desire the realization of my son's every whim without ever asking myself whether attainment will be a good for him. "What's your will?" asks one of Shakespeare's characters. "That you have yours," is the reply.

We must accordingly make a distinction now for which we were not prepared earlier in our survey. It is that between reflective and unreflective benevolence. The former is desire for what I regard as a good. Unreflective egoism is desire for the realization of ends, dissevered from any thought of their value,—ends which are not objects of true desire at the moment but which I believe will become such at some future time. Unreflective altruism is the same phenomenon applied to the desires of others.

I must add that while the distinction is undoubtedly a real one and of much theoretical significance I doubt whether it is of a great deal of practical importance, especially where the reference is to self. It is theoretically possible to hear a sound without a single mental movement towards interpreting it as a sound proceeding from such and such an object. And sometimes we can actually catch ourselves in such a state of mind. But, as far as I can observe, this happens rather rarely. If my experience is typical, sense impressions are almost invariably interpreted, even though often very incompletely. So it is, I think, with the good. There need be no explicit analysis; the process may consist of a glance, or the recognition of the proposed experience as of

a kind previously labeled by me as a good. *Cui bono* is the ordinary reaction to the idea of any important act, even though the reaction take place in the background of consciousness. This fact must serve as my justification for identifying, up to the present, reflective benevolence with benevolence as such. Furthermore, reflective benevolence is the only form that has fundamental significance for a theory of ethics, since the object of the moral judgment and the source of that judgment are the desire for good.

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# BIBLIOGRAPHY

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